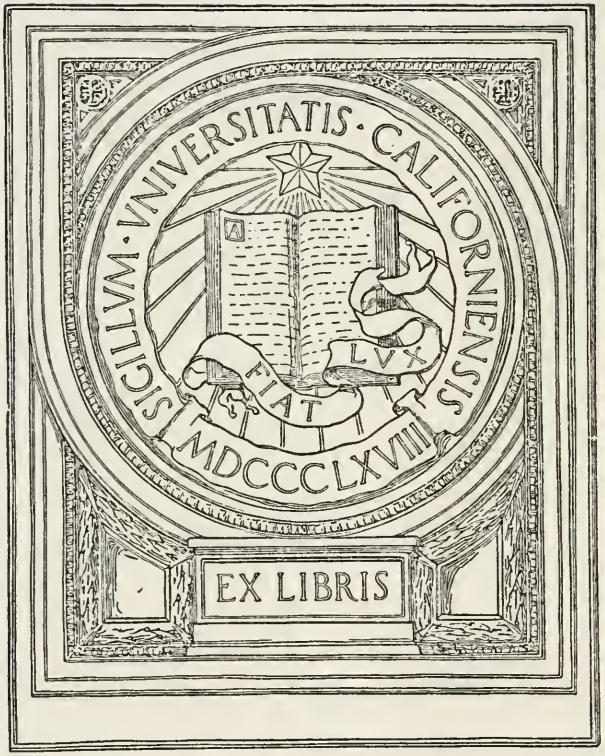
WHEN YOU WERE A BOY

EDWIN L. SABIN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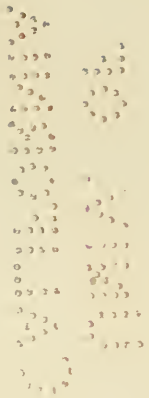
To my Dear Son

From Dear old Pop—

Christmas. 1905



WHEN YOU WERE A BOY

MANAGERIE
GREEN ROOM
IN HEAR.
NO ADMITTANCE
AMERICAN
CAT

WHEN YOU WERE A BOY

BY

EDWIN L. SABIN

WITH PICTURES BY

FREDERIC DORR STEELE

New York

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THE MATCH GAME

"YOU"

WHEN YOU WERE A BOY

THE MATCH GAME

"OUR" NINE	"THEIR" NINE
Billy Lunt, c	Spunk Carey, c
Fat Day, p	Doc Kennedy, p
Hen Schmidt, 1b	Screw Major, 1b
Bob Leslie, 2b	Ted Watson, 2b
Hod O'Shea, 3b	Red Conroy, 3b
Chub Thornbury, ss	Slim Harding, ss
Nixie Kemp, lf	Pete Jones, lf
Tom Kemp, rf	Tug McCormack, rf
"You," cf.	Ollie Hansen, cf

We:	5	9	9	8—31
They:	11	14	9	16—50

FAT DAY was captain and pitcher. He was captain because, if he was *not*, he wouldn't play, and inasmuch as he owned the ball, this would have been disastrous; and he was pitcher because he was captain.

In the North Stars were other pitchers — seven of them! The only member who did not aspire to pitch was Billy Lunt, and as

catcher he occupied a place, in "takin' 'em off the bat," too delightfully hazardous for him to surrender, and too painful for anybody else to covet.

FAT DAY

The organization of the North Stars was effected through verbal contracts somewhat as follows:

"Say, we want you to be in our nine."

"All right. Will you lemme pitch?"

"Naw; Fat's pitcher, 'cause he's captain; but you can play first."

"Pooh! *Fat* can't pitch —"

"I can, too. I can pitch lots better'n *you* can, anyhow." (This from Fat himself.)

"W-well, I'll play first, then. I don't care."

Thus an adjustment was reached.

A proud moment for you was it when *your* merits as a ball-player were recognized, and you were engaged for center-field. Of course, secretly you nourished the strong conviction

that you were cut out for a pitcher. Next to pitcher, you preferred short-stop, and next to short-stop, first base. But these positions, and pretty much everything, in fact, had been pre-empted; so, after the necessary haggling, you accepted center-field.

Speedily the North Star make-up was complete, and disappointed applicants — those too little, too big, too late, or not good enough — were busy sneering about it.

The equipment of the North Star Base-Ball Club consisted of Fat's "regular league" ball, six bats (owned by various members, and in some cases exercising no small influence in determining fitness of the same for enlistment as recruits), and four uniforms.

BILLY LUNT

Mother made your uniform. To-day you wonder how, amidst darning your stockings and patching your trousers and mending your waists, she ever found time in which to supply you with the

additional regalia which, according to your pursuits of the hour, day after day you insistently demanded. But she always did.

SPUNK CAREY

The uniform in question was composed of a pair of your linen knickerbockers with a red tape tacked along the outside seam, and a huge six-pointed blue flannel star, each point having a buttonhole whereby it was attached to a button, corresponding, on the breast of your waist. And was there a cap, or did you wear the faithful old straw? Fat Day, you recollect, had a cap upon the front of which was lettered his rank — "Captain." It seems as though mother made you a cap, as well as the striped trousers and breastplate. The cap was furnished with a tremendously deep vizor of pasteboard, and was formed of four segments, two white and two blue, meeting in the center of the crown.

All in all, the uniform was perfectly satisfactory; it was distinctive, and was surpassed by none of the other three.

Evidently the mothers of five of the North Stars did not attend to business, for their sons played in ordinary citizen's attire of hats, and of waists and trousers unadorned save by the stains incidental to daily life.

The North Stars must have been employed for a time chiefly in parading about and seeking whom they, as an aggregation, might devour, but as a rule failing, owing to interfering house-and-yard duties, all to report upon any one occasion. The contests had been with "picked nines," "just for fun" (meaning that there was no sting in defeat), when on a sudden it was breathlessly announced from mouth to mouth that "the Second-street kids want to play us."

HEN SCHMIDT

"Come on!" responded, with a single valiant voice, the North Stars.

"We're goin' to play a match game next Tuesday,"

you gave out, as a bit of important news, at the supper-table.

CHUB THORNBURY

"That so?" hazarded father, who had been flatteringly interested in your blue star. "Who's the other nine?"

"The Second-street fellows. Spunk Carey's captain and—"

"Who is *Spunk* Carey? Oh, Johnny, what outlandish names you boys do rake up!" exclaimed mother.

"Why, he's Frank Carey the hardware man's boy," explained father, indulgently. "What's his first name, John?"

"I dunno," you hurriedly owned; "Spunk" had been quite sufficient for all purposes. "But we're goin' to play in the vacant lot next to Carey's house. There's a dandy diamond."

So there was. The Carey side fence supplied a fine back-stop, and thence the grounds extended in a superb level of dusty green, broken by burdock clumps and interspersed with tin cans. The lot was bounded on the east by the Carey fence, on the south and west by a high

walk, and on the north by the alley. It was a corner lot, which made it the more spacious.

The diamond itself had been laid out, in the beginning, with proportions accommodated to a pair of rocks that would answer for first and second base; a slab dropped where third ought to be, and another dropped for the home plate, finished the preliminary work, and thereafter scores of running feet, shod and unshod, had worn bare the lines, and the spots where stood pitcher, catcher, and batter.

A landscape architect might have passed criticism on the ensemble of the plat, and a surveyor might have taken exceptions to the configuration of the diamond, but who cared?

DOC KENNEDY

"We" had promised that "we" would be there, ready to play, at two o'clock, and "they" had solemnly vowed that "they" would be as prompt. Tuesday's dinner you gulped and gobbled; in those days your stomach was patient and charitable almost

beyond belief in this degenerate present. It was imperative that you be at Carey's lot immediately, and despite the imploring objections of the family to your reckless haste, you bolted out; and as you went you drew upon your left hand an old fingerless kid glove, which was of some peculiar service in your center-field duties.

RED CONROY

Your uniform had been put on upon arising that morning. You always wore it nowadays except when in bed or on Sundays. It was your toga of the purple border, and the bat that you carried from early to late, in your peregrinations, was your scepter mace.

At your unearthly yodel, from next door rushed out your crony, Hen Schmidt, and joined you; and upon your way to the vacant lot you picked up Billy Lunt and Chub Thornbury.

The four of you succeeded in all talking at once: the Second-streets were great big fellows; their pitcher was Doc Kennedy and it wasn't

fair, because he threw as hard as he could, and he was nearly sixteen; Hop Hopkins said he'd be "empire"; Red Conroy was going to play, and he always was wanting to fight; darn it — if Fat only wouldn't pitch, but let somebody else do it! Bob Leslie could throw an awful big "in," etc.

The fateful lot dawned upon the right, around the corner of an alley fence. Hurrah, there they are! You see Nixie and Tom Kemp, and Hod O'Shea, and Bob Leslie, and Spunk, and Screw Major, and Ted Watson, and Slim Harding, and the redoubtable Red Conroy (engaged in bullying a smaller boy), and others who must be the remainder of the Second-streets.

OLLIE HANSEN

"Hello, kids," you say, and likewise say your three companions; and with bat trailing you stalk with free and easy dignity into the crowd.

"Where's Fat? Who's seen Fat?" asked everybody of everybody; for Captain Fat was the sole essential

personage lacking. However, even without him, pending his arrival the scene was one of stirring animation.

Thick and fast flew here and there the several balls on the grounds, each nine keeping to itself, and each boy throwing "curves" — or, at least, thus essaying.

BOB LESLIE

You yourself, brave in your splendor of blue star and red stripe, endeavored, by now and then negligently catching with one hand, to make it plain that you were virtually a professional.

The Second-streets were as yet ununiformed, even in sections. But they were a rugged, rough-and-ready set, and two of them had base-ball shoes on, proving that they were experts.

"Here's Fat! Here comes Fat!" suddenly arose the welcoming cry; and appareled in his regimentals, his cap announcing to all beholders his high rank, panting, hot, perspiring, up hustled the leader of the North Stars.

It was time to begin.

"Who's got a ball?" demanded Umpire Hopkins, sometimes called Harry, but more generally known as Hop or Hoptoad.

The query disclosed a serious condition. Balls there were, but not suitable for a championship match game. They were ten- and fifteen-centers, as hard as grapeshot or already knocked flabby.

"Where's your ball, Fat?" you asked incautiously.

"In my pocket," admitted Fat — a bulging fact that he could not well deny.

"What is it? Le' 's see, Fat," demanded Captain Spunk.

"It's a regular dollar league," you informed glibly; and Fat, with mingled pride and reluctance, extracted it from the pocket of his knickerbockers, — peeled it, so to speak, into the open, — and handed it out for inspection.

PETE JONES

"Gee!" commented Spunk, thumbing it, and chucking it up and catching it. "It's a dandy! Come on, kids; here's a ball!"

"But if you use my ball, you've got to give us our outs," bargained Fat, dismayed.

HOD O'SHEA

"G'wan!" growled Red Conroy. "Don't you do it, Spunk. 'Tain't goin' to hurt his old ball any."

Awed by the ever-belligerent Red, Fat submitted to the customary lot by bat. Spunk tossed a bat at him, and he caught it, with an elaborate show of method, about the middle; then with alternate hands they proceeded to cover it upward to the end.

The last hand for which there was space was Fat's; by no manner of means could Spunk squeeze his grimy fist into the two inches left.

"We'll take our outs," majestically asserted Captain Fat; whereat whooped shrilly all the North Stars, and quite regardless of their affiliations whooped shrilly the spectators also, com-

posed of small brothers and a few friends about equally divided between the contestant nines.

Some preliminaries were yet to be gone through with. Doc Kennedy was protested because he pitched so swift.

"Aw, *I* won't throw hard," he assured bluffly.

"Of course not! *He's* easy to hit," chorused his companions.

Then, in view of the fact that Billy Lunt had a sore finger, as evidenced by a cylinder of whitish rag (which he slipped off, obligingly, whenever solicited), it was agreed that he be allowed to catch the third strike on the first bounce.

A foul over the back-stop fence was out; a like penalty was attached to flies over the boundary walks.

And now, turning handsprings and otherwise gambolling exultantly, the North Stars scattered to their respective positions.

Away out in center-field you prepared to guard your territory. You bent over, with

SCREW MAJOR

your hands upon your knees, and ever and anon you spat fiercely, sometimes upon the ground and sometimes into your kid glove. This was the performance of the players upon the town's nine, the Red Stockings, and evidently greatly added to their efficiency.

TED WATSON

Besides, on the edge of the walk just back of you were sitting and swinging their slim legs two little girls, whom it was pleasant to impress.

Overhead the sun was blazing hot, but not to you; underfoot the dust from a long dry spell lay choking thick, but not to you; a "darning-needle" whizzed past, and you scarcely ducked, although he might be bent upon sewing up your ears.

Your work was too stern to admit of your noticing sun, or dust, or mischievous dragon-fly.

So you spat into your glove, replaced your hands on your knees, and waited.

"Hello, Johnny!" piped one of the little girls; but you deigned not to make answer.

To right and to left were the Kemp boys, with their hands upon *their* knees; and before were the infielders, with their hands likewise upon *their* knees; that is, all except the pitcher.

SLIM HARDING

"Play ball!" gruffly bade the umpire.

Captain Spunk advanced to the slab.

"Gimme a low ball," he ordered, sticking out his bat to indicate the proper height that would meet his wishes.

Captain Fat rolled the ball rapidly between his palms, and thus having imparted to it what he fondly believed was a mysterious twist, hurled it.

"One ball!" cried the umpire.

Captain Spunk banged the slab with his bat.

"Aw, gimme a low ball over the plate!" he urged.

Again the pitcher rubbed twist into the sphere, and out in center-field you hung upon his motions.

"One strike!" declared the umpire, and a great shout of derision arose from the North Stars and their adherents.

TOM KEMP

Captain Fat smiled wickedly: the unfortunate batter was being fooled by those deceptive curves.

"What did you strike at that fer—'way up over yer head!" censured Red Conroy, angrily.

"Darn it! gimme a good low ball! You're 'fraid to!" challenged Captain Spunk.

Whack! He had hit it. Right between Short-stop Chub's legs it darted, and you and left-field together stopped it, but too late to prevent the runner's reaching first.

Chub came in for a tongue-lashing from all sides; and then Spunk stole second, and Billy threw over Bob's head there (at the same time throwing the rag cylinder, also, half-way to the pitcher's box), and you desperately fielded the

ball in, and Fat got it, and threw over Hod's head at third, and to the wild cries of "Home! Home! Sock her home!" Nixie got it and threw it at Billy; but nevertheless Spunk, spurred on by the frantic exhortations of his fellows, panting "Tally one!" crossed the slab.

Triumphantly cheered the Second-streets, and busily flashed the jack-knife of each spectator as he cut a tally-notch in a stick.

Billy ran forward and reclaimed his precious rag.

Ten more tallies were recorded before the half-inning closed. The whole North Star nine was red from running after the ball and disputing with the umpire—disputes into which everybody on the ground had earnestly entered. Red Conroy had threatened to "smash" several North Stars, you among them; Catcher Billy had long since witnessed his cylinder trampled into the diamond and ruined; Captain Fat had tried all the most deadly twists

NIXIE KEMP

in his repertoire; when, finally, hot and irritated, you and yours had come in.

And now, reminding Pitcher Doc that he had promised not to throw hard, Billy stepped to the plate, to hit, to reach first, daringly to steal second, foolishly to be caught between bases, successfully to dash past Red, who endeavored to trip him, and out of the confusion safely to attain third, whence soon he galloped home, and tallied.

"'Leven to five!" declared the sprawling spectators, every one a score-keeper, to each other, as at last in scampered the Second-streets and out lagged the North Stars.

You had not batted, and you were relieved, because batting was a great responsibility, with your critical fellows advising you, and castigating you whenever you missed.

In this their next inning the Second-streets made fourteen! Notwithstanding Fat's utmost art, as signified by his various occult motions, they batted him only too easily, and kept infield and outfield chasing all over the lot. Yet he angrily refused to "let somebody else pitch." Bob Leslie even attempted to take the ball away from him and forcibly trade places — a

mutiny which called forth an "Aw, g'wan an' play ball, you kids!" from the waiting batter, Screw Major.

"Why don't you fellows stop some of them grounders, then?" retorted Fat to derogatory accusations. "Gee whiz! You don't stop nothin'!"

Thus it resolved into a question of whether 't was not stopping, or having o'ermuch to stop, that brought disaster.

It was your turn. Your faced the mighty Doc. He threw, and the ball came like a cannon-shot, you thought.

"You're throwin' swift!" you remonstrated.

"Shut up!" sneered Red, from third. "Who's a-throwin' swift? Give him one in the head, Doc!"

Blindly you struck, and the condemnations of your mentors squatting anear raked you fore and aft.

Quite unexpectedly you hit it. You did not know where it went, but you scudded for first.

"Second! Second!" gesticulating frantically, bawled all your companions, coaching you onward.

"Second! Second!" bawled with equal fervor your opponents, coaching the fielder.

You grabbed off your cap, — it is strange how much faster a boy can run when thus assisted, — and madly dug for second. Praise be! There you were, beating the ball, which appeared from a mysterious somewhere, by a hair's-breadth.

You stuck to second, meanwhile dancing and prancing to tantalize the pitcher, until another hit forwarded you to third, for which you slid, not because it was absolutely necessary to slide, but because the slide was a part of the game.

Here, at third, while you were dreaming of the home slab, and the honor of admonishing, hoarsely, for the information of the world, "Tally me!" Red, the ruthless, abruptly gave you a shove, hurling you from position.

"Quick, Doc!" he cried.

Doc responded with the ball.

"Out!" decreed the umpire.

"But he shoved me! He shoved me off the base!" you shrieked.

"*Who* shoved yer? I didn't, neither! G'wan! Yer out; don't you hear the empire?" snarled back Red.

"You did, too!" you asserted.

"He did, too! No fair! He shoved him like everything!" vociferated all the North Stars and their supporters.

"You're out! You're out!" gibed the Second-streets, from catcher to farthest fielder.

"Out!" majestically pronounced the umpire again.

Slowly, obedient to the higher authority represented in the freckled-faced Hoptoad, you walked down the base-line. In some way, apparently, you had disgraced your blue star, begrimed from your manful slide, for "Why did you let him touch you?" accused your comrades.

The idea! How could you help it, you'd like to know.

It was the first half of the fifth inning. The score, according to the notches on the sticks, was fifty to thirty-one, in favor of the Second-streets. Those spectators who had exercised the forethought to start with long sticks were in clover, while those with short sticks were having hard work to find space for all the runs.

The sun was not so high as when the game

began, neither were your spirits. Much excited chasing, and much strenuous yelling, had told upon you. Your face was streaked; your hair was in dank disorder; your blue star flapped, and your waistband sagged behind, mourning for departed buttons. You were what mothers style "a perfect sight."

The air had been rent by incessant wranglings. Tom Kemp and Screw Major had indulged in a brief rough-and-tumble, because Screw had thought that Tom had purposely trodden upon his sore toe, Screw injudiciously being barefoot.

Every member of the North Stars had committed egregious errors, and had been tartly excoriated by all hands. You yourself had muffed, and had thrown the ball seven ways for Sunday.

Fat was still doggedly clinging to pitch, and Doc was throwing swift. The two little girls, once your admirers, had gone away in disgust. And the score, as remarked above, was fifty to thirty-one.

Tug McCormack it was who picked out one of Fat's wonderful twisters and batted it over your head. After it you raced, deliriously dis-

carding, of course, your sadly abused cap, that you might gain in speed. Behind you bellowed friends and enemies, and around the bases was pelting Tug.

Where was the ball — oh, where *was* it! It must have struck a can or stick, and bounded crooked.

"Hurry! Hurry!" exhorted the Second-streets to Tug.

"Home! Home! Home with it!" exhorted the North Stars to you.

"Pick it up now and look for it afterward!" yelled second base.

"What's the matter with you? It's right there!" yelled Captain Fat.

"Darn it! Ain't you got eyes?" yelled left-field, and "You darned fool!" yelled right-field, converging from each side.

"Lost ball!" you screamed, tramping hither and thither to show that you spoke truth.

"Lost ball!" screamed the Kemp brothers.

"Lost ball! Lo-o-ost ba-a-all!" chimed in the North Stars generally.

But Tug had scored.

"No fair!" objected Billy Lunt. "He's got to go back to second. Lost ball! Don't you hear? Lost ball!"

"I don't care. 'Tain't my fault," confuted Tug.

"Course not!" said Captain Spunk, scornfully.

"But you can't come in on a lost ball; can he, Hop?" appealed Billy to the umpire.

"Shut up! What yer talkin' about? Course he can," affirmed Red.

"Shut up yourself!" hotly bade Billy. "*You* aren't runnin' the game. Can he, Hop?"

"I dunno!" confessed Umpire Hop, digging with his toe at a mound of dirt.

"Ya-a-a-a-ah!" sneered Red at the discomfited Billy.

"Well, he can't just the samee!" resolved Captain Fat. "It's my ball."

"Just the samee, he can!" contradicted Captain Spunk. "It's my father's lot."

"Lost ball! Lo-o-ost ba-a-all!" you and Nixie and Tom had been calling as unceasingly as the tolling of a bell; and continuing the discussion, which abated never, the members of both nines, and the spectators, who also were the score-keepers, scattered over the ground to assist in the search.

It seemed that no effort or artifice, even to

lying down and rolling where the weeds were thick, could bring to light that ball, until suddenly piped little Jamie Watson:

"Red Conroy's runnin' off!"

"He's got it, I bet you! Hey! Stop, thief!" hailed Tom, quickly.

"Drop that ball! Stop, thief!" swelled the chorus.

But down the alley legged Red, and disappeared over a fence. Evidently he had "got it."

"Wait till I catch him!" promised Fat, in deep, wrathful tones.

You ought to have been very tired that evening at the supper-table, but you were not, for in those days you never were tired, save momentarily. However, you still were green and brown in spots that your hurried washing had not touched, and dusty in other sections that your equally hurried brushing had omitted. Your face was as red as a setting sun, and you were full of experiences — a fulness that did not in the slightest impair your appetite.

"Who beat?" had inquired mother, as you had come trudging in.

"We only played four innin's, and they were fifty and we were thirty-one, and then Red Conroy stole the ball," you explained.

"Well, who beat?" asked father, at the table.

"Nobody did," you stated, this solution having occurred to you. "We didn't finish, 'cause Red Conroy he ran off with the ball."

"But what was the score when this happened?" pursued father.

"Fifty to thirty-one — but it was only four innings," you answered, with a wriggle.

"And who made the fifty?" persisted father, ignoring mother's warning frown.

"They — they did," you blurted; and then you hastened to add, "But they're lots bigger'n us."

TUG McCORMACK

YOU AT SCHOOL

" I WANT TO GET UP'"

YOU AT SCHOOL

NOW and again you dream one special dream. Suddenly you find yourself back in school. There you are, a great awkward man, squeezing into the old familiar seat and essaying some strangely mixed-up lesson. And about you are the mates of yore, who have not, apparently, grown a bit.

Although they seem not to notice anything peculiar in your presence, nevertheless your position is decidedly embarrassing to you. You feel that you must mind the teacher, of course, and yet you cannot, for the life of you, get that lesson! What a gawk you are! And how in the world are you ever going to stand this awful reversal?

Then you awaken, and with a sigh of relief discover yourself, in the gray of the morning, safely brought down to date, in your bed.

And once more you sigh, but this time not in relief. It is a sigh tenderly laid by retrospection upon the urn of the past.

In your dream the schoolroom was unusually small, and your seat was constricted to the extent that your knees were tightly pressed against the under side of the desk, while the edge of it was creasing your stomach. However, probably it was not that the room and the seat had shrunk; it was that you had expanded beyond limits.

In the days when it was quite proper that you should be in school, the room was extensive indeed, and the seat was ample for innumerable wriggles. For instance, it permitted you to slide down until, reaching forward with your two feet, you engaged the insteps of Billy Lunt, and hauling back with all your might, deliciously held him so that he could move only from the waist upward. Abruptly you released him, and his feet dropped with a big thump that made the teacher frown.

This seat and desk was your little state, surrounded by other little states similar to it, and all ruled by "teacher," who, like some Pallas Athena, from her Olympia platform surveyed and appraised, bade and forbade.

Your state was bounded on the rear by Snoopie Mitchell's, on the front by Billy Lunt's,

on the right and the left by a river, or aisle, such as at regular intervals divided the country and opened up the interior to travel.

This was a country of equal suffrage; some of the states were feminine, some were masculine. All, but especially the masculine, were liable to internal troubles, produced through external agencies.

As example, the bent pin was an indefatigable disturber of the peace. It would intrude at the slightest opportunity, and the first thing that you knew it was in your midst — almost literally. The canny explored their seat of state (or their state of seat, if preferred) with their hands, before venturing to settle for the pursuance of routine duties.

Poor, long-suffering Billy Lunt (yet poor you, as well; for although you are behind him, the mischievous Snoopie is behind *you*)! Down he plumps, and up he jumps with a wild "Yow!" at which your whole being exults even while your heart beats uneasily. You descry, where he is frantically clutching, the steely glint of *it!*

"Will, sit down!" thunders the teacher.

This, forsooth, is adding insult to injury; for had he been able to sit, assuredly he would not

thus have arisen. In a moment he cautiously, gingerly obeys, at the same time holding into sight the pin, as though it were a monstrosity, so that all must see.

TEACHER

To "yow" very loudly, and to expose the cause with great ostentation to the utmost publicity, was the resort of every pin-afflicted petty ruler.

"John, did you put that pin on Will's seat?" demands the teacher.

The wave of sniggers that had swelled during Billy's antics ebbs and dies, and all the world listens for your reply.

With the frankest astonishment — astonishment that ought to have completely turned sus-

picion — you have been gazing at the Lunt performance. Has he gone crazy? What can ail him? Who could have done it to him?

This simulated wonder is *your* part of the program — your voluntary part, that is.

"John, I ask you if you put that pin there," reiterates the persistent examiner, judge, and executioner.

And now that the glamour of the deed has faded, how you wish that you had *not!* For the voluntary part of the program is always followed by an involuntary part.

All in all, the possession of a state in these united states is fraught with peril. So much is prohibited. It is unlawful to have a poor memory or a dull brain or a careless tongue; it is unlawful to carry on intercourse, either written or oral or by signs, with neighbor states; it is unlawful to import articles for consumption — such as cinnamon drops, or lemon drops, or jujube, or licorice; while to import gum is a capital offense.

Nevertheless, gum is imported and secreted by being stuck to the inner surface of the desk-top, thence to be peeled off at recess and at closing-time, and chewed. Sometimes it is for-

gotten, and the janitor contemptuously scrapes it to the floor for his dust-heap, or a successor to you rapturously finds it. Whenever one moves into a new state, one runs a pleasurable chance of discovering a gum-deposit.

The principal penalties are "stayin'-after-school," "gettin'-sent-home," and "lickin's."

It is the close of a day in this despotic monarchy, and the despot has tapped her bell for books to be put away. The next tap will mean dismissal; but between taps comes the allotment of punishments.

You reflect — and regret. There was once during the day when you asked Billy Lunt if he had "the first example." You whispered it very circumspectly, but the unruly sibilants in your tones somehow spread into the open. "Teacher" pricked her ears in your direction, and with her pencil she apparently made a memorandum upon her ready slip.

Was it your name she jotted? Or was it Billy's? He was in the act of showing you his slate. You are ungenerous enough to hope that it was Billy's.

In the meantime you hold your breath (as, in similar anxiety, round about you do your

compatriots, save the goody-goodies and the "teacher's pets," whose names never are read) and listen.

The kids are going swimming; the signal has been passed along. You have set your heart upon going with them. Consequently, never have you felt so repentant, so full of high resolves and the best intentions, and your appealing gaze might well have moved a stone, to say nothing of a teacher.

"Those whose names I read may remain," she announces calmly: "Sam Jessup, Dolly Smith, Horace Brown, Leonard Irving, Patrick Conroy, Olga Jansen, *John Walker!*"

"STAYIN'-AFTER-SCHOOL"

Crushed, you hear the second tap; freed, the others rise; out they file, but you stay behind — you

and a few companions in misery scattered at wide intervals through the nearly deserted room.

From without sound gay shouts and laughter, growing fainter and fainter, and dying in the distance.

You are marooned.

"Take your books and go to work at some lesson!" orders the teacher.

Maybe, if you strive hard and obediently, she will let you go soon. Some of the prisoners shuffle angrily, and rebelliously bang things about in their desks; but you promptly open your geography, and hoping that her eye is noting you, pretend to apply yourself to its text. Silence falls, broken only by the measured *tick-tock* of the clock on the wall.

Presently you glance up. Five minutes have passed. "Teacher," with eyes fastened upon her desk, is engaged in correcting a quantity of exercises. She seems to pay not the slightest attention to the clock.

You give a weary little shuffle — your first — and turn a page.

Two more minutes. Even yet you could catch the kids. How good you are! But, blame it, what is the sense, if she does not notice?

Tick-tock, *tick-tock*, repeats the monitor on the wall, checking off the wasted moments.

Ten minutes! Is she going to keep you all night? Doesn't she see what time it is getting to be? You make a lot of noise, to warn her; but she never looks. For all that is evident, she might have forgotten the existence of you and everybody else. She simply goes on reading and marking.

Twelve minutes. You raise your hand. You keep it raised. You shuffle some more, and you cough, and you shuffle again.

"Well, John, what is it?" she vouchsafes in a tired voice.

She has heard you all the time, but you don't know it. Neither do you know that she has been reading you while reading scrawly exercises.

"How long do I have to stay?"

"Until I tell you you may go."

Fifteen minutes. You throw off your hypocritical sainthood, and you lapse into your genuine boiling, raging self. Darn her. Darn the teacher! Darn the old teacher! What does she care about going swimming? She just wants to keep a fellow in! You'll show her sometime!

And you shuffle and scrape and kick and bang, and she apparently pays not the least heed to it.

The darned old thing (although, in truth, she is *not* old, save in boy eyes and in boy ways)!

Twenty minutes! Darn the —

"You may go now, Johnny."

She cuts your condemnatory sentence right in the middle; and not finishing it, you hastily throw the geography into your desk, and make for the door. On your way you dart a glance at her, wondering if she knows what names you have been calling her. She smiles at you, and you feel rather sheepish.

After all, you have time for a swim, delightfully prefaced by throwing mud at the whole crowd in ahead of you.

Staying-after-school is a penalty for misdemeanors; for crimes there is "gettin'-sent-home" — not bad at all until you get there, furnishing, as it does, a vacation — and "lickin's," which sounds worse than it really is.

"Lickin's" don't hurt half the time. Never would a boy admit, outside, that a licking hurt; he "bellered just for fun"! The fact is, lots of the kids declared they had rather take a licking

than be kept after school, for a licking was soon over, and then you were through.

But by virtually unanimous vote the kids all asserted that they had rather be licked, any day, or stay after school for a whole month, than "speak."

It is Friday afternoon — a fateful Friday when sashes and squeaky shoes and slicked hair and significantly arrayed chairs herald "speaking day." And you are among the elect, as testify your red tie without and your uneasy heart within.

Early the books are put away, and with the clearing of the desks are cleared also the metaphorical decks.

A bustle is heard at the threshold, and in come the first of the visitors — a pair of mothers. Whose mothers they are is speedily indicated by the flaming ears of a very red girl and a very red boy, at whom, as the intelligence spreads, all the school looks.

The mothers rustle chairward, settle into place, and smilingly wait.

Another bustle! More visitors! Out of the corner of your eye you slant one apprehensive glance in their direction, and then you quickly

turn your head the other way. It is *your* mother. You felt it even before Snoopie gave you a painful telegraphic kick. She has come. She said that she might. You have been alternately hoping and fearing. Now you know.

In impish ecstasy Snoopie keeps dealing you irritating jabs. *His* mother *never* comes.

Teacher moves from the platform and seats herself at one side. It is the final preparation. In her hand she holds the list of prospective performers, and somewhere adown it is your name.

You would give worlds to know just where — just whom you follow. The chief agony attached to the afternoon is in the racking uncertainty as to when one will be called upon. The nearer the top of the list, the better, for thereafter one will be free to revel in the plight of others. But to be reserved until toward the last, and to sit in a cold sweat through most of the afternoon — ah, this is the suspense that fairly curls one's toes!

Listen! She is going to read.

"Harry Wilson. Recitation: 'George Nidiver.'"

Amid oppressive silence Harry clumps up the

aisle, and stumbling miserably on the platform step receives a tribute of grateful titters. Teacher taps rebukingly with her pencil, and frowns. Harry bobs his head for a bow, and, white and blinky, proceeds:

"Men have done brave deeds,
And bards have sung them well:
I of good George Nidiver
Now the tale will tell.

"In California mountains
A hunter bold was he:
Keen his eye and sure his aim
As any you should see.

"A little Indian boy
Followed him everywhere,
Eager to share the hunter's joy,
The hunter's meal to share."

You would bask the more unrestrictedly in Harry's presence did you not see in him your unlucky self; and while he is speaking you feverishly go over and over parts of your own piece.

As Harry approaches the end, his pace grows faster and faster, until at a gallop he dashes through the concluding stanza, offers a second

bob in lieu of other punctuation, long lacking, and clumps back to his seat, where he grins rapturously, as if he had at last had a tooth pulled.

How you envy Harry's light-heartedness as with bated breath you strain your ears for the next announcement!

"NINA GOTTLOB. COMPOSITION: 'KINDNESS'"

This proves to be "Nina Gottlob. Composition: 'Kindness.'" After Nina somebody else, not you, is summoned; and thus name after name is read, with you hanging on by your very eyebrows, before, at the most unexpected moment, come to you, like the crack o' doom, the words: "*Johnny Walker.* Recitation: 'The Soldier of the Rhine.'"

The teacher looks at you expectantly. Snoopie trips you as you tower into the aisle. Oh, the tremendous distance which you, all feet and arms, traverse in getting to the platform! You mount; and here you stand, a giant, and bow.

Away below, and stretching into space remote, are faces of friends and enemies — the ones (mostly those of little girls) gravely staring at you, and the others twisted into hideous grimaces calculated to make you laugh. As in a dream you witness your mother gazing up at you with beaming, prideful, but withal anxious eye.

Very vacant-headed, you drag from your throat a thin stranger voice which says:

"A soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers;
There was lack of woman's nursing, there was dearth
of woman's tears,"

and mechanically maintains the narrative for some moments, and then on a sudden peters out!

You cast about for something with which to start it up again, but you light upon nothing. All the faces in front watch you curiously, amusedly, grinningly. Helpless, you look in the direction of Billy Lunt, upon whose desk, as you passed, you had laid the book, that he might prompt you, if necessary.

Billy has lost the place, and is desperately running his forefinger adown the page.

"'Tell my mother that her other sons —'"

presently he assists, in husky tones; and, as if set in motion by the vibrations, your voice, with an apologetic "Oh, yes," goes ahead once more.

"'Tell my mother that her other sons shall comfort her old age,
For I was ay a truant bird, that thought his home a cage;
For my father was a soldier —"

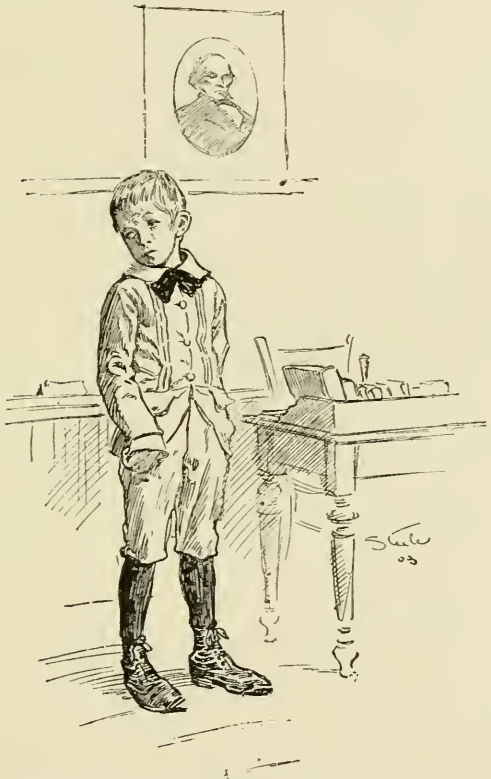
And so forth.

Several times it stops again, but Billy sits alert to fill in each hiatus; and vastly relieved in mind you triumphantly regain your seat, only to ascertain, to your disgust, that you are the last of the afternoon's victims.

Escape from this despotism of school, with its penalties and speaking and other disagreeable features, which combined to outweigh any possible advantages or profit, was always engaging in prospect, although apt to be unsatisfactory in realization.

You longed to be a man. You wondered how it would seem to walk about paying no attention whatsoever to the old bell. Were the people outside the school aware of their fortunate state? Gee!

It was an odd fact that in the week the finest and most interesting days, out of doors, habitually were Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,



"'A SOLDIER OF THE LEGION LAY DYING IN ALGIERS'"

Thursday, and Friday — and Sunday. The best fishing invariably came on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday — and Sunday. You always felt the most like having fun

on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday — and Sunday. What was measly little Saturday, eclipsed so by these other days all-glorious without!

If your folks were only like Snoopie's folks you could play hooky once in a while. Snoopie asserted that his father "didn't care." Yours did — very much.

The sole recourse which remained for you was being sick; and insomuch as the real article was annoyingly scarce with you, it was requisite that you manufacture some substitute.

'Tis a spell of beautiful weather — the kind of weather that came, as aforesaid, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays — and Sundays. Your feet lagged to school, and your heart kept pace with them. Now you are idling in your seat, utterly unable to work. A vagrant bee hums in through an open window, and hums out through another. A woodpecker drums, as on a sounding-board, upon the spire of the Congregational church. A blue jay screams derisively, like an exultant truant, among the elms arching the street in front. All these things upset you, stirring as they do the *Wanderlust* of boyhood.

The sky never has been so blue, the grass and the trees never so green, the sunshine never so golden, nor the air so mellow, as at recess.

You hate school. You don't want to go in. Snoopie volunteers:

"Let's play hooky this afternoon, and go fishin'!"

"My father won't let me," you declare.

"Aw, come on. He'll never know," scoffs Snoopie.

But he would, just the same.

The only chance you have is to be sick.

It is over-late to be sick to-day, for there is a ball game after school, and you are to take part. If you are sick this evening, when the sports of the day are finished, your mother will accuse you of having played too hard, and such a notion would turn your attack into a boomerang.

You will be sick in the morning.

Accordingly, with great languidness you flop into your chair at breakfast, and carefully dawdle over your food. You endeavor not to eat, although, as luck would have it, the menu is one of which you are particularly fond. But so much the better.

"Why, John, you aren't eating! Isn't the breakfast good?" exclaims mother, instantly noting.

"Yes,'m."

"Then why don't you eat it?"

"Come, eat your breakfast, Johnny," supplements father.

"I don't want to," you plead.

"Don't you feel well?" asks mother anxiously.

"Not very."

"Where do you feel sick?"

"Oh, my head aches."

"Give me your hand."

You lay it in hers, and she thoughtfully holds it and scrutinizes you.

"I do believe that the boy has a little fever, Henry," she says to father.

"Maybe he's caught cold. Better have him keep quiet to-day," suggests father. "I'll do his chores this morning."

You really begin to feel ill, the word "fever" has such a portentous sound. And you thereby submit the easier to being stowed upon the sofa against the wall, your head upon a pillow and the ready afghan over your feet and legs.

"There's so much measles about now; don't you think we ought to have Dr. Reese come in and look at him?" remarks mother to father, in that impersonal mode of conversation, like an aside, which seems to presuppose that you have no ears.

"N-n-no," decides father. "I'd wait and see if he doesn't feel better soon."

In his eye there is a twinkle, at which mother's face clears, and they exchange glances which you do not comprehend.

The first bell rings. The chattering boys and girls on their way to school pass the house. But no school for you, you bet! And the last bell rings. As you hark to some belated, luckless being scampering madly by, you hug yourself. Let the blamed old bell bang; you don't care!

The summons dies away in a jarring clang. Here you are, safe.

You remain prone as long as you can, but your sofa-station at last grows unbearably irksome. It is time that you pave the way for more action. Mother is bustling in and out of the room, and you are emboldened to hail her:

"I want to get up."

"Not yet," she cautions. "Lie quiet and try to go to sleep."

Sleep!

She places her cool palm, for a moment, upon your forehead.

"I don't think that you've got much fever, after all," she hazards. "But lie still."

Out of policy you strive to obey for a while longer, but every muscle in your eager body rebels. You twist and toss; you stick up one knee, and then the other, and then both at once; and finally a leg dangles to the floor over the outer edge of your unhappy bed.

"I want to get up. I feel lots better," you whine.

"No," rebukes mother, firmly. "Papa said that you were to keep quiet."

"But I will be quiet," you promise.

"W-well, only you must not go outdoors," she warns.

However, anything to be released from that narrow sofa; so off you roll, and apply yourself further to the delicate business of gaining health not too rapidly, yet conveniently.

It appears, however, that, according to some occult line of reasoning, "a boy who is not well

enough to do his chores or go to school is not well enough to play"! The more vigorous you grow, the more this maxim is rubbed into you.

When the afternoon has fairly set in, you have become so very, very well that in your opinion you may, without risk of a relapse, play catch against the barn — which, of course, would be a preliminary warming up, leading to meeting the kids after school. You propose the half of your project to your mother; but she sees only impropriety in it, and proffers that if you really need exercise you may finish uncompleted chores!

After school you hear the other boys tearing around; but you must "keep quiet"! The only consideration won by your suddenly bursting health is intimation from mother that unless you moderate, you will be deemed strong enough to stand a "good whipping."

In fact, the whole bright day proves more of a farce than you had anticipated. What is the use of being sick, if you are not allowed to have any fun?

By bedtime your mysterious malady is by common consent a thing of antiquity and in the morning you go to school.

The time arrives when you go no more. You yourself are now of that free company whom you have so envied. Yet it does not seem such a wonderful company, after all. You find that your position still has limitations. When you had lived within, it was permitted you to pass and mingle with the life without; but now that you have chosen the without, not again may you pass within, save in dreams.

CHUMS

CHUMS

DON'T you remember when, your mother laughingly dissenting, your father said that you might have him, and with rapture in your heart and a broad smile on your face you went dancing through the town to *get* him?

There was quite a family of them — the old mother dog and her four children. Of the puppies it was hard to tell which was the best; that is, hard for the disinterested observer. As for yourself, in the very incipiency of your hesitation something about one of the doggies appealed to you. Your eyes and hands wandered to the others, but invariably came back to him.

With the mother anxiously yet proudly looking on, you picked him up in your glad young arms, and he cuddled and squirmed and licked your face; and in an instant the subtle bonds of chumship were sealed forever. You had chosen.

"I guess I'll take this one," you said to the owner.

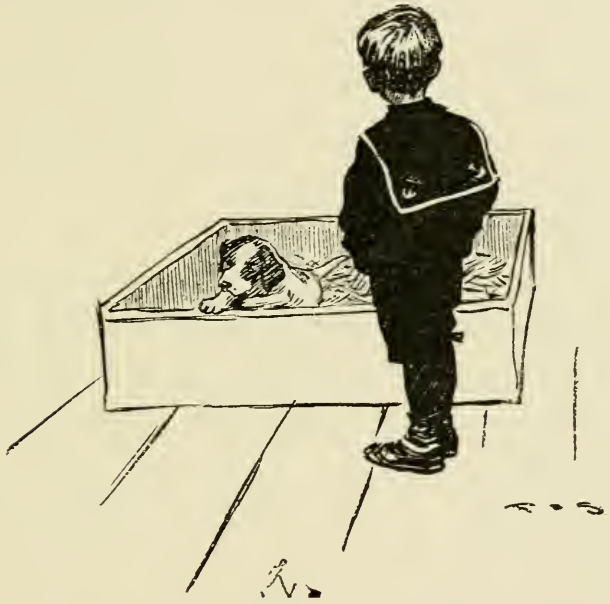
And without again putting him down you carried him off, and home.

How unhappy he appeared to be, during his first day in his new place! He whined and whimpered in his plaintive little tremolo, and although you thrust a pannikin of milk under

his ridiculous nose, and playmates from far and near hastened over to inspect him and pay him tribute, he refused to be appeased. He simply squatted on his uncertain, wabbly haunches, and cried for "mama."

You fixed him an ideal nest in the barn; but it rather made your heart ache — with that

vague ache of boyhood — to leave him there alone for the night, and you went back many times to induce him to feel better. Finally, you were withheld by your father's: "Oh, I wouldn't keep running out there so much, if I were you.



Let him be, and pretty soon he'll curl up and go to sleep."

Sure enough, his high utterances ceased, and nothing more emanated from him. Whereupon your respect for your father's varied store of knowledge greatly increased.

In the morning you hastened out before

breakfast to assure yourself that your charge had survived the night; and you found that he had. He was all there, every ounce of him.

What a wriggly, rolly, awkward lump of a pup he was, anyway! How enormous were his feet, how flapping his ears, how whip-like his tail, how unreliable his body, how erratic his legs! Yet he was pretty. He was positively beautiful.

Your mother could not resist him. Can a woman resist anything that is young and helpless and soft and warm? With pictures in her mind of ruined flowers and chewed-up household furnishings, she gingerly stooped down to pet him; and at the touch of his silky coat she was captive.

"Nice doggy!" she cooed.

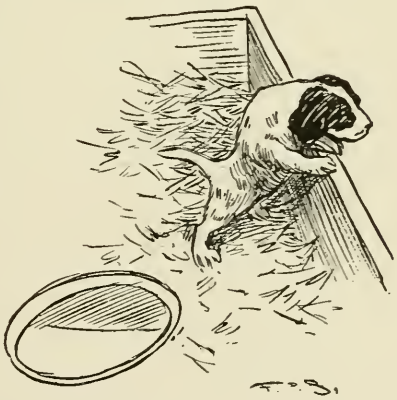
Upon which he ecstatically endeavored to swallow her finger, and smeared her slippers with his dripping mouth, and peace was established. Thereafter mother was his stoutest champion.

The christening proved a matter requiring considerable discussion. When it comes right

down to it, a name for a dog is a difficult proposition. It may be easy to name other persons' dogs, but your own dog is different.

Your father and mother, and even the hired girl, proposed names, all of which you rejected with scorn, until, suddenly, into existence popped a name which came like an old friend. You seized it, attached it to the pup, and it just fitted. No longer was he to be referred to as "it," or "he," or "the puppy." He possessed a personality.

The hired girl — and in those days there were more "hired girls" than "domestics" — was the last to yield to his sway. She did not like dogs or cats about the house; dogs caused extra-work, and cats got under foot.



But upon about the third morning after his arrival you caught her surreptitiously throwing him a crust from among the table leavings that she was bearing to the alley; and you knew that he had won her. Aye, he had won her. You

also found out that he much preferred a crust thus flung to him from the garbage to any carefully prepared mess of more wholesome food.

Probably this subtle flattery pleased the girl, for although her grimness never vanished, once in a while you descried her smiling through it,

in the course of a trip to the back fence while the puppy faithfully gamboled at her skirts in tumultuous expectation of another fall of manna.

He grew visibly — like the seed planted by the Indian fakir. Enormous quantities of bread and milk he gobbled, always appearing in fear lest the supply should sink through the floor before he had eaten his fill. Between

meals his body waned to ordinary size; but, mercy! what a transformation as he ate! At these times it swelled and swelled, until, the pan empty, the stomach full, its diameter far exceeded its length.

However, there was a more permanent growth than this, as you discovered when you awoke to the fact that his collar was too tight for him. So you removed it, and in the interval between removing the old and getting the new properly engraved, his neck expanded fully an inch. The old collar would not meet around it when, as a test, you experimented.

So good-by to the collar of puppyhood, and let a real dog's collar dangle about his neck. The step marked the change from dresses to trousers.

Not only bread and milk and other mushy non-stimulating stuff did he eat, but he ate, or tried to eat, everything else within his reach. Piecemeal, he ate most of the doormat. He ate sticks of wood, both hard and soft, seemingly preferring a barrel-stave. He ate leaves, and stones, and lumps

of dirt, and the heads off the double petunias and the geraniums. He ate a straw hat and a slipper. He attempted the broom and the clothes-line, the latter having upon it the week's

wash, thus adding to the completeness of the menu.

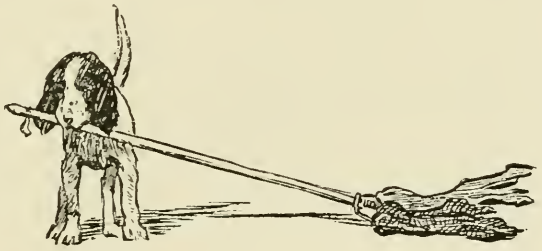
In his fondness for using his uneasy teeth, new and sharp, he would have eaten *you*, did you not repeatedly wrest your anatomy from his tireless jaws.

As it was, you bore over all your person, and

particularly upon your hands and calves, the prints of his ravaging, omnivorous mouth.

Your mother patiently darned your torn clothing, and submitted to having her own imperiled and her ankles nipped; while your father time and again gathered the scattered fragments of his evening paper, and from a patchwork strove to decipher the day's news.

And "Look at him, will you!" cried the hired



girl, delighted, indicating him as he was industriously dragging her mop to cover.

Well, like the storied peach, he "grew, and grew." Speedily he was too large for you to hold in your arms, and although he insisted upon climbing into your lap, you could no more accommodate him there than you could a huge jellyfish. He kept slipping off, and was all legs.

He fell ill. Ah, those days of his distemper

were anxious days! He wouldn't eat, and he wouldn't play, and he wouldn't do anything except lie and feebly wag his tail, and by his dumbness place upon you the terrible burden of imagining his condition inside.

Here came to the rescue the old gardener, — Uncle Pete, black as the ace of spades, — who gave you the prescription of a nauseous yet simple remedy which you were compelled lovingly and apologetically to administer three times a day; and behold, the patient was cured. You didn't blame him any for rising from his bed; and you wouldn't have blamed him any for cherishing against you a strong antipathy, in memory of what you forced down his throat. But he loved you just as much as ever.

Now he developed roaming propensities, which took the form of foraging expeditions. Once he brought back a five-pound roast of beef, his head high in the air, and buried it in the garden. Diligent inquiry exposed the fact that the beef had been intended by a neighbor for a dinner for a family of six, and for subsequent relays of hash, etc. Your mother, with

profuse apologies, promptly sent over a substitute roast, the original being badly disfigured.

Upon another occasion he conveyed into the midst of a group consisting of your mother and father, and the minister, guest of honor, sitting on the front porch, a headless chicken, still quivering. You were commanded to return the fowl, if you could; and after making a canvass of the neighborhood you found a man who, having decapitated a choice pullet, and having turned for an instant to secure a pan of hot water, was mystified, upon again approaching the block, to see, in all his level back yard, not a vestige, save the head, of the feathered victim. When you restored to him his property, he laughed, but not as if he enjoyed it.

Along with his foraging bent, the dog acquired a passion for digging. One day he accidentally discovered that he *could* dig, and forthwith he reveled in his new power. Huge holes marked where he had investigated flower-beds or had insanely tried to tunnel under the house.

He grew in spirit as well as in stature. He had his first fight, and was victorious, and for days and days went around with a chip on his shoulder, which several lickings by bigger dogs

did not entirely remove. Out of that first fight and the ensuing responsibility of testing the mettle of every canine whom he encountered came dignity, poise, and courage. His puppy days were over. He had arrived at doghood.

What sweet years ollowed! It was you and the dog, the dog and you, one and inseparable. When you whistled, he came. All the blows you gave him for his misdemeanors could not an iota influence him against you. Other comrades might desert you for rivals of the moment, but the dog never! To him you were supreme. You were at once his crony and his god.

When you went upon an errand, the dog was with you. When you went fishing or swimming or rambling, the dog was with you. When you had chores to do, the dog was your comfort; and when you were alone after dark he was your protection. With him in the room or by your side you were not afraid.

When you had been away for a short time, who so rejoiced at your return as the dog?

Who so overwhelmed you with caresses? Not even your mother, great as was her love for you.

Did you want to frolic? The dog was ready. Did you want to mope? He would mope, too. He was your twin self, and never failed.

The sun and you were up together on that summer morning, and the dog joined you as soon as you threw open the barn door. Almost you had caught him in bed, but not quite, although he had not had time to shake himself, and thus make his toilet.

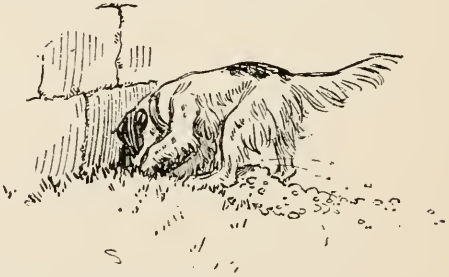
Intuition told him that such an early awakening meant for him a day's outing, and he leaped and barked and wagged his glee.

You worked with a will, and when the hired girl summoned you to breakfast the kitchen wood-box had been filled, and all the other

jobs laid out for you had been performed, and you were waiting. So was the dog, but not for breakfast. He was waiting for *you*.

How he gobbled down the scraps constituting his meal; never pausing to chew, and frequently desisting in operations in order to run around the house and investigate lest, by hook or crook, you might be slipping off without his knowledge!

Now your boy companion's whistle sounded in front; and hastily swallowing your last mouthfuls, disregarding your mother's implorations to "eat a little more," with the paper packages containing your lunch of bread and butter and sugar and two hard-boiled eggs stuffed into your pockets, sling-shot in hand, out you scampered; and the dog was there before you.



Along the street you gaily hied, the three of you, until the over-arching, dew-drenched elms and maples ended, and the board walk ended, and you were in the country.

Civilization was behind you; all the world of field and wood was ahead.

Don't you remember how balmy was the air that wafted from the pastures where the meadow larks piped and the bobolinks rioted and gurgled? Don't you remember how the blackbirds trilled in the willows, and the flicker screamed in the cottonwoods? Don't you remember how you tried fruitless shots with your catapult, and how the dog vainly raced for the gophers as he sped like mad far and wide?

Of course you do.

The morning through you trudge, buoyant and tireless and fancy-free; fighting Indians and bears and wildcats at will, yet still unscathed; roving up hill and down again, scaling cliffs and threading valleys, essaying perilous fords, and bursting the jungles of raspberry-bushes; and you guess at noon, and sprawl in the shade, beside the creek, to devour your provisions.

During the morning, some of the time you have seen the dog, and some of the time you have not. Where you have covered miles

he has covered leagues, and more than leagues; for a half-hour he will have disappeared entirely, then, suddenly, right athwart your path he hustles past, in his orbit, as though to let you know that he is hovering about.

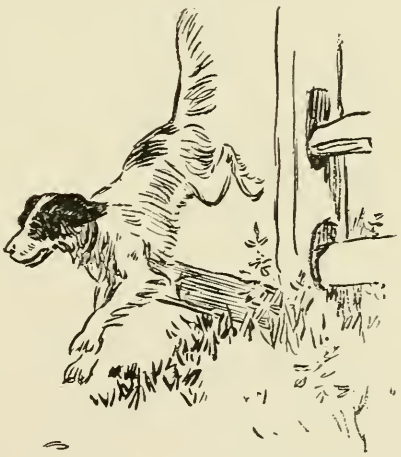
While you are eating, here he comes. He seats himself expectantly before you, with lolling tongue, and gulps half a slice of bread, and looks for more. A dog's only selfishness is his appetite. He will freeze for you, drown for you, risk himself in a hundred ways for you, but in the matter of food he will seize what he can get and all he can get, and you must take care of yourself.

The lunch is finished, and the dog, after sniffing for the crumbs, sinks down with his nose between his paws, to indulge in forty uneasy winks until you indicate what is to be the next event upon your program.

Presently, however, with a little whine of restlessness, he is off.

You are off, too. It is the noon siesta. The air is sluggish. The birds and the squirrels have relaxed, and the woods are subdued. The strident *scrape* of the locusts rises and falls, and the distant shouts of men in harvest-fields float in upon your ear. You are burning hot; but the water of the creek is cool — the only cool thing in your landscape. A swim, a swim! Your whole being demands that you go in swimming.

The dog already has been in a number of times, as his wet coat has evidenced. Feverishly following the winding stream, envying the turtles as they plunge in, upon your approach, you arrive at a bend where the banks are high, and the current, swinging against them, halts and forms an eddy. Here the depths are still and dark and beckoning.



To strip those smothering garments from your sunburnt body is the work of but an instant, and in you souse, not without some misgiving as to possible water-snakes and snapping-turtles, but spurred by a keen rivalry as to which shall "wet over" the first.

Oh, the glorious, vivifying thrill that permeates you as you part the waters!

The dog again! From the bank he surveys

the proceedings with mingled curiosity and apprehension, and finally, with a whine of excitement, dashes into the shallows and makes for your side. You are neck-deep, and he is swimming. His hair feels queer and clammy against your skin, and his distended claws raise a welt upon your bare shoulder as he affectionately tries to climb on top of you. You duck him, and grab at his tail; and convinced that you are in no immediate danger, he plows for

the shore, where he contents himself with barking at you.

Despite the dog's remonstrances and entreaties, you sported in that blissful spot until the sun was well down the west; now you frolicked in the cool eddy, now you dabbled amid the ripples of the shoals just below, and now you dawdled on the warm, turfy banks. The dog

stretched himself by your clothing and went to sleep.

At length, with blue lips and chattering teeth, and a ring of mud encircling your mouth, marking where years later the badge of manhood would appear, you donned your clothes, and, weak but peaceful, to the rapture of the dog started homeward.

He did not know that you were going home. When you had left home in the morning he did not know that you were coming here. He did not care then; and he does not care now. You are doing something, and he is a partner in it; and that is sufficient.

Homeward, homeward, through woods and across meadows where the birds were gathering their evening store and voicing their praises and thanks because the sun had been so good. Homeward, homeward, not talking so much as when your faces were turned the other way, not

frisking so much as formerly, and with the dog trotting soberly near your heels.

You were dead tired, the three of you.

When you were about a block from the house, the dog pricked up his ears and trotted ahead, to wait for you at the gate. While you ate your supper he slept on the back porch; and after his own supper he slinked straight into the barn, to bed.

And soon, he in his nest up-stairs in the barn, you in your nest up-stairs in the house, alike you were slumbering; for neither could possibly sleep sounder than the other.

Years sped by, and the dog remained an integral part of the household. Such a quaint, quizzical, knowing old chap, with an importance ridiculous yet not unwarranted, with an individuality all his own, thoroughly doggish, but well-nigh human. He was affectionate toward the rest of the family, but you he adored. He might occasionally bluffly growl at others, but never at you. You could make him do anything, anything. To him you were perfect, omnipotent, and with you at hand he was happy.

You emerged from the grammar school into

the high school. Then arrived that summer when you went to visit your aunt and uncle, and stayed three weeks. You remember the visit, don't you?

And when you disembarked at the station on your return, and your mother was there to meet you, even while kissing her you looked for the dog.

"Where's Don?" you asked.

"Why, John," reproved your mother, as so often she had jokingly done before, "do you think more of seeing your dog than of seeing me?"

This silenced you.

But when you had entered the yard, and next the house, ungreeted by the familiar rush and volley of barks, you were impelled to inquire again:

"Where *is* Don, mother?"

Mother put her arm around you, and laid her lips to your forehead; and even before she spoke you felt what was coming.

"Johnny dear, you never will see Don any more," she said; and she held you close while you sobbed out your first real grief upon her breast.

When you could listen she told you all — how they had found him, lifeless, where he had crawled under the porch; how they had buried him, decently and tenderly, where you might

see his grave and put up a headboard; how they had kept the news from you, so that your visit should not be spoiled; and how, all the way from the depot, her heart had ached for you.

Thus the dog vanished from your daily life, and for weeks the house and yard seemed very strange without him. Then, gradually, the feeling that you were to come upon him unexpectedly around some corner wore off. You grew reconciled.

But to this day you are constantly encountering him in dreamland. He hasn't changed, and in his sight apparently you haven't changed. You are once more boy and dog together. This leads you to hope and to trust — indeed, to believe — that, notwithstanding your mother's gentle admonition, you *will* see him again, in fact as well as fancy, after all.

IN THE ARENA

"'WE GOT EACH OTHER DOWN'"

IN THE ARENA

WHEN a boy retorted with the direct challenge, "An' you da'sn't back it!" it was a case, if you did not wish to lose caste, of your either taking the aggressive or effecting some honorable compromise.

It was difficult to explain to an outsider, to one not in sympathy with the duello, the deep significance of "da'sn't back it." You felt the term, but you could not elucidate it, save, to some extent, by example; you yourself, with a red spot on your forehead, a scratch on your nose, a torn collar to your waist, a rent in your knickerbockers, and a proud spirit in your bosom, being the example.

"Now, I *should* like to know what you were fighting about," declared your mother, holding you prisoner at her knee while she stitched your collar so as to make you presentable for supper.

You squirmed, realizing the task before you.

"Well, we were playin', an' Ted he tripped me, an' I said he did it on purpose (an' he did,

too), an' he said he didn't an' I said he did, an' he said I was a liar an' da'sn't back it, an' I went to back it, an' he hit me, an' —"

"But what *is* to 'back it'?" interrupted your mother.

"Why, to back it — to back it, you know. He said I da'sn't *back it*, an' I had to or else I'd be a coward, an' he hit me, an' I hit him, an' —"

"But how could you back being a liar? I don't understand."

She was a darling mother, yet at times surprisingly dense.

"I *did* back it, though, just the same." That ought to be exposition enough, and you galloped on with your narrative: "An' I hit him, an' he hit me right on the forehead, — but it didn't hurt, — an' I — an' then we got each other down, an' I was gettin' on top, an' then the kids pulled him off, an' a man came by an' wouldn't let us fight any more. Ted's ten, an' I'm only nine."

Thus, with a little valorous touch, you finished your story. This much you accomplished, even though you evidently had failed in bringing your mother to a clear perception of "backing it."

"John had a fight this afternoon; have you heard about it?" asked your mother, gravely, of your father at supper.

Father looked at you inquiringly.

"What's that, John? Fighting! With whom?"

"'SAY, SPECK SAYS HE CAN LICK YOU'"

It was a portentous moment.

"Ted Watson. He tripped me on purpose an' nearly made me fall when I was runnin', an' then he told me I da'sn't back it. But we didn't fight long, 'cause a man came by an' stopped us."

"You can see he scratched his nose, and his collar was torn almost off his shirt," supplemented your mother.

"I tore *his* collar, too — an' I bet he's goin' to have a black eye," you hastened to state, in palliation.

"W-w-well, I'm astonished, John!" asserted your father, very solemnly.

You fastened your eyes upon your plate, and could think of nothing to say in rebuttal. You had stalked homeward a hero, fondly expecting that your parents would be proud of you, who, only nine, had combatted a boy of ten, and were "gettin' on top"; but witness how they had wet-blanketed you!

"I told him that he ought to have refused to fight, and it would have made the other little boy ashamed," informed your mother.

"By all means," approved your father.

Coming from your mother, the advice, while of course absurd, had not seemed so strange; after all, she never had been a boy, and girls didn't fight; but your father's traitorous acquiescence goaded you to desperation.

"Did *you* ever da'sn't back it when you were a boy like me, papa?" you appealed; and

although you were not fully cognizant of the fact, you had him hip and thigh.

He glanced at your mother, and had you been looking at him instead of still eying your plate, you would have seen his mouth twitch in a funny way.

"You do as mama says. She's always right," he answered, and you had a dim suspicion that he was begging the question.

The little encounter between Ted and you was described much more quickly than it had occurred. The duello as practised in your corps did not admit of undue precipitancy in falling to blows. A certain amount of palaver was obligatory first — an exchange of witticism and defiance, beyond which, as often as not, one did not proceed.

When Ted had tripped you, and you had angrily accused him of having done it on purpose, he had denied it just as angrily:

"Didn't, neither!"

"Did't, either!" said you.

"Didn't, neither!" said he.

"Did't, either!" said you.

"Didn't, neither. You're a liar!" said he.

"Did't, either. You're another!" said you.

"You're another 'nother!" said he.

"You're twice as big as anything you can call me!" said you — a crusher, and quite unanswerable.

"You're twice as big as that, an' you da'sn't back it!" said he, also scoring a point.

"YOU LET YOUR FOLLOWING FEEL YOUR MUSCLE"

"He says you da'sn't back it! Ya-a-a-a-ah! he says you da'sn't back it!" gibed the boys about you, glorying in the crisis.

Ted and you were now uncomfortably in the center of a circle which was ever being increased

by the jubilant cries of "Fight! Fight!" which summoned spectators from all quarters.

"G'wan an' back it! You can lick him!" urged your supporters.

"Aw, he's 'fraid to! He's 'fraid to!" scoffed your rivals.

Ted and you, grimy fists doubled, not knowing exactly what to do, faced each other. Neither of you wanted to fight. Fighting was being forced upon you. You were to amuse the pitiless crowd.

"I ain't, either, afraid," you asserted sullenly.

"I wouldn't let him trip *me* up that way, you bet," inspired a friend on your right, boldly.

"An' call me a liar an' everything!" added a friend on your left.

Oh, how solicitous of your honor were they who were not to do the fighting!

"He *is* a liar if he says I tripped him on purpose," stoutly reiterated Ted, slightly qualifying his former blunt statement.

"You're another!" you returned. "Anyhow, it *looked* as if you tripped me on purpose."

You, likewise, were hedging a mite.

"There! He called *you* a liar, too!" admonished the circle to Ted.

"Then he's another, an' he da'sn't back it," responded Ted, grimly performing his duty.

This harmless verbal fencing might have been continued up to the very present, and the ethics of the duello not have been violated, had not some over-zealous enthusiast pushed Ted and you together, with the result that, in fending each other off, you, according to the eager verdict of the highly observant critics, "backed it," and he hit you, simultaneously; whereupon, not seeing anything else left to do, at each other you went like a couple of jumping-jacks, until (fortunately, you held, for Ted) the approach of the man caused him to be removed from on top of you.

Flushed, excited, and disheveled, you went your way; and flushed, excited, and disheveled, Ted went his way. Throughout your route, you and your babbling escorts, with many a "Gee!" and "Darn!" discoursed upon what you had done, and what Ted had not done, and what would have happened had the fight lasted only a minute longer.

Loudly you wrangled with them as to which got the worst of it, quite blind to the fact, which now you are free to acknowledge, that the one

who got the worst of it was your mother, for she had to mend your clothes.

She was always getting the worst of it. She was the unlucky non-combatant.

The duello produced the best of feeling between Ted and you. Fights were for mutual benefit. Swelling dignity and biceps so demanded expression that they could not forever be gratified by merely playfully poking chums in the ribs.

"YOU . . . ARE THE INVENTOR OF A PECULIAR, IRRESISTIBLE BLOW"

Therefore it is plain why, when a friend mischievously reported to you, "Say, Speck says he can lick you," it was all that was required. Like to a strutting cockerel who hears a distant crow, you bristled in answer.

"He can't, either. I can lick him with one hand tied behind my back."

Fast flew the news to Speck, and Speck promptly resented the slur, as he should. The boys of the neighborhood were pleased.

Now you, and likewise Speck, are the objects of much flattering attention. You let your following feel your muscle, and they let you feel theirs, and you are firmly convinced that yours is the hardest. Also, you are convinced that you have a great knack at fisticuffs, and are the inventor of a peculiar, irresistible blow which you deliver, the knuckle of the middle finger carefully protruded, under your warding left arm. More or less secretly you have demonstrated it while "fooling" with your companions.

You can chin yourself six times, and you are, in valor and strength, a boy wonder.

Your companions favor you with adulation to a degree compatible with their own self-respect; for most of them, too, are boy wonders.

Well as Speck and you are satisfied with bravado and careful avoidance of each other, it is inevitable that you meet.

"There's Speck — see? Come on; *you* ain't afraid of *him!*"

You have committed yourself too far for

graceful retreat, and in the midst of your crowd you advance boldly to join Speck and his crowd.

The rival clans come together and mingle, but Speck and you pretend not to see each other.

"John says he can lick you, Speck!"

Yes, you have said so, but it was under provocation of, presumably, a direct challenge from him. However, the duello does not thrive on explanations, and Speck and you are in the hands of your friends.

The all-engaging topic has been broached. Speck apparently does not hear. Maybe the matter will be dropped. But no.

"He says he can lick you with one hand — aw, Speck!"

"He can't, though," defends Speck.

"Speck says he can't, either," obligingly announces his backers.

"Well, he can, I bet you."

"Bet you he can't."

"He'll show him whether he can or not."

"Huh! I'd just like to see him once!"

You find yourself hustled forward and set against Speck, who in like manner has been

pressed to the front. Your hands hang limply by your side; so do Speck's. You feel very tame and pale and artificial; not a whit mad; not a

"'KNOCK THAT OFF, IF YOU DARE'"

whit like fighting. The pugnacity is your seconds'.

Somebody laboriously balances a small block on Speck's shoulder.

"Knock that off, if you dare," bids a Speck chorus.

"I will if I want to," you assert.

"Well, do it, then!" invites Speck.

"I will if I want to."

"Well, do it, then!"

"I will if I want to."

You strive to work up steam by biting your lips, and raising your voice, and spitting ferociously into the dust; you are assisted by the irritating shoves bestowed upon you from behind.

"Well, do it, then!"

"I will if I want to."

Impatient fingers supply you also with a gage of defiance, an impertinent sliver laid athwart your collarbone.

"Now let's see Speck knock *that* off!"

Speck disdainfully lifts his hand and brushes the offending chip to the ground.

"Hit him, John!"

"Don't you stand that!"

"There!" you say, tapping him gently on the breast.

"There!" he answers, tapping you a little harder.

"There!" you return, tapping him harder still.

"There!" he retaliates, tapping you yet harder.

Then with a final "There!" that breaks through all restraint, and amid shrill, rap-

turous cheers, two pairs of arms begin to whirl with wild rapidity, the sole thought of their owners being a blind offense according to hit-who-hit-can rules.

The engagement did not last long. A horrified and meddlesome old lady interfered, and after informing you both many times that "little boys shouldn't fight," your temperature down again to normal, she sent you off with your disappointed encouragers, while she conscientiously watched you out of sight.

Up to date the question whether you can lick Speck or Speck can lick you is no further settled. Henceforth the spirit of amity prevailed between you. Mettle had been proved, the fight had been fought, and now somebody else must furnish entertainment.

Although victory, actual or prospective, of course never was doubtful (either you were winning, or the other fellow was winning, according as to which did the telling), at some times it appeared to a spectator more decisive than at others.

You were feeling very spunky that noon when amid your preserves you descried a stranger boy; but civilly you challenged him. One may

witness two bluff but wary fox-terriers thus approach each other, accost, and investigate.

"Hello!" you wagged; that is, said.

"Hello, yourself!" wagged he.

"Say — what's your name?" you inquired, as you had every right to do.

"Puddin' tame; ask me again, an' I'll tell you the same," he replied insolently.

At the unmerited rebuff you stiffened.

"Better not give *me* any of your sass!" you growled.

"TWO PAIRS OF ARMS BEGIN TO WHIRL"

"Pooh! What'll *you* do!" he growled back.

"I'll show you what I'll do."

"You couldn't hurt a flea."

"I couldn't, couldn't I?"

"Naw, you couldn't, 'couldn't I.'"

Walking circles around each other, after this fashion you and he sowed crimination and recrimination, while larger and larger waxed an audience hopeful of seeing them spring up as blows.

Only when the flurry came did you discover too late how much taller and stronger and older than you he was. Your bleeding nose showed this to you; and cowed and weeping, you retreated in bad order.

"I'll tell my big brother, an' *he*'ll fix you!" you howled threateningly.

"Aw, he ain't got any big brother," jeered the heartless crowd, who saw no pathos in your abused organ.

That was true; you had none.

"I'll tell my father, then," you wailed angrily — another empty boast; and still sniffling and, fearsomely gory, with the handkerchiefs of yourself and your one faithful companion quite exhausted, you reached the haven of a friendly pump.

Yet you had not been whipped — not exactly.

"Got licked, didn't you?" unkindly commented various friends and enemies.

"I didn't, either!" you asserted, indignant.

"I had to quit 'cause my nose was bleedin'. It takes more'n him to lick me."

"He gave you a bloody nose just the samee."

You would not admit so much as that.

"He didn't, either; he never touched my nose. It bleeds awful easy. It bleeds sometimes when you just *look* at it — don't it, Hen?"

THE CIRCUS

THE CIRCUS

TIME : When " You " were a Boy
PLACE : Up-stairs in Hen's Barn

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HEN SCHMIDT, Proprietor and Ringmaster
YOU, Proprietor and Contortionist
BILLY LUNT, Trapeze and Tumbling
TOM KEMP, Trapeze and Juggling
NIXIE KEMP, Trapeze and Tight Rope
FAT DAY, Clown
SNOOPIE MITCHELL, Everything

ADMISSION — Ten Pins to All, including Grand Menagerie

THE CIRCUS

CIRCUS was in the air. Circus had been in the air for some time, exhaled broadcast by village billboards and fences, and the fronts and exposed sides of numerous buildings. Breathing this atmosphere, small wonder is it that you and your compatriots were circus-crazy, and cared not who knew it.

The circus came. From half-past four, in the pink of the dawn, until nightfall, it was given your unremitting aid and presence — the two in one. Your fellows were equally assiduous. Nothing that might be done outside the tent was left undone; nothing that might be inspected was overlooked. As for the inside, some of your friends penetrated, like yourself, with the escort of father, mother, uncle, brother, or neighbor; some, like Snoopie Mitchell, "snuk under"; but all were there.

The circus went. Behind it remained, as evidences of its visit, the still contagious bills; one more welt in the shape of a ring, added to

the other similar but older welts upon the face of that historic pasture patch; and a burning ambition in the breast of every youth.

Now witness each back yard a training-school

for tumblers, trapeze-experts, weight-slingers, jugglers, bareback-riders, and tight-rope walkers. Right among the foremost were *you*.

"Hen and me are goin' to have a circus," you vouchsafed importantly at the family board.

"Hen and who?" queried father, quizzically.

"Hen and *me*." Why fuss with grammar, when greater things were impending? It is not what one says, but what one does, that counts: at least, according to your copy-book at school, in which you had laboriously written, "Deeds, not Words," twenty times.

"We're goin' to give it in Hen's barn, and you and mama've got to come."

"I don't know that I can get away, having just been to one," stated father, gravely. "I didn't expect another so soon."

"*I'll* come," comforted mother. "When is it?"

"We dunno yet; but everybody that gets in has got to bring ten pins — and bent ones don't count, either. Hen's mother's comin'."

"Do you think we can spare ten pins?" inquired mother of father.

The idea seemed preposterous to you, with a whole cushion bristling on the bedroom bureau; but nevertheless you awaited, with considerable anxiety, father's reply.

"I guess so," answered father. "But members of the performers' families ought to go in free. How's that, John?"

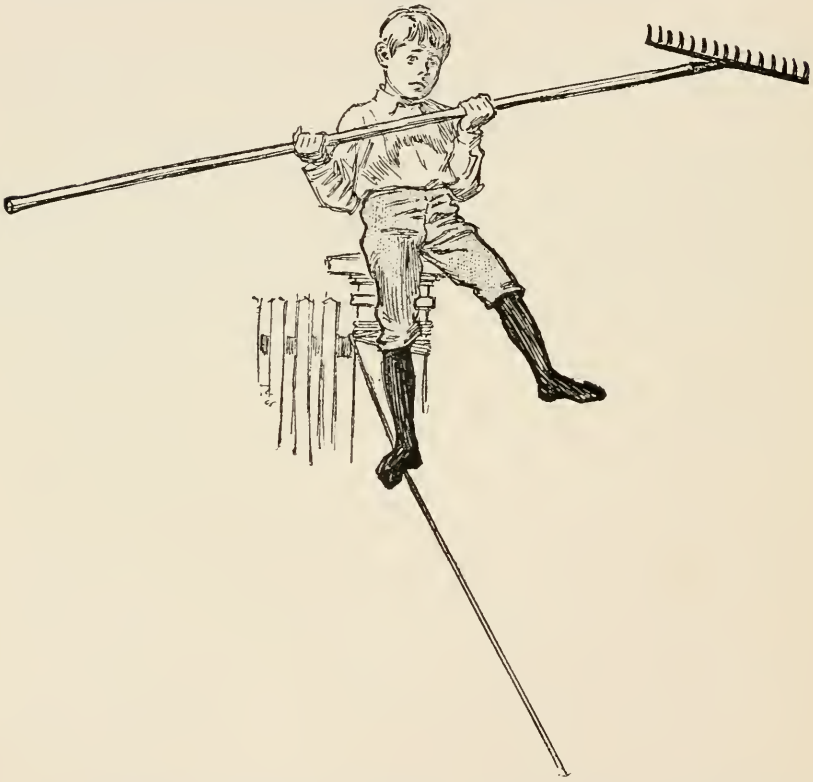
You shook your head decidedly. Such a suggestion must be nipped in the bud.

"*Naw*, sir! Everybody has to pay!"

There was no dearth of performers; they were as plenty as ball-players, and you had an embarrassing number of volunteers, who offered themselves as soon as the news of your circus spread through the neighborhood.

Snoopie Mitchell was among the earliest.

"Say, I'll be in your circus," he proposed. "I can skin the cat twice, an' do the giant's swing, an' turn flip-flops both ways, an' —"



"Pooh! That's nothin'. So can I," scoffed Hen.

"You can't, neither!" contradicted Snoopie. "Le' 's see you, now."

Hen obligingly cut a caper.

"Aw, gee!" sneered the redoubtable Snoopie, in high scorn. "That ain't no hand-spring! That's a cart-wheel! Anybody can turn a cart-wheel! Aw, gee! Lookee here! Here's the way *you* did." He demonstrated. "Lookee!" — and again he demonstrated. — "*That*'s a reg'lar hand-spring."

"Well — I can do it, only my back's lame," faltered the abashed Hen. "And I can skin the cat, too. Can't I, John?"

You nodded.

"But I've skun it twice, an' John's seen me, haven't you, John?" trumpeted Snoopie.

You nodded confirmation to this, also.

"Yep," you said; "he did, Hen; truly he did."

"Without changin' hands?" insisted Hen.

"Of course," asserted Snoopie.

Snoopie was accepted.

Tom Kemp and Nixie Kemp were organizing a circus of their own, but consented to be in yours if you'd be in theirs.

Over Billy Lunt occurred almost a fight, because a rival company set up the claim that he had promised them; but by bribe of a jews'-harp he was won to your side. Fat Day was

asked chiefly on account of his pair of white rats, which would prove a valuable addition to the prospective menagerie.

"If you'll lemme be clown, I'll bring 'em," consented Fat.

"But John he's clown," explained Hen.

This was true. Before advertising for talent, Hen had preëmpted ringmaster, and you, clown, as the choice positions, which was only the part of ordinary discretion.

"I tell you, Fat: you can be fat boy, and wiggle your ears and make folks laugh," suggested Hen, eagerly.

"Uh-uh! If I can't be clown, I won't be nothin'," declared Fat. "An' you can't have my white rats, either."

Hen looked at you dubiously.

"All right. I don't care. Let him," you assented moodily, kicking up the dirt with your toe.

"You can be one clown, Fat, and John'll be the other," proffered Hen, with fine diplomacy. "And you and he can make b'lieve fight, and things. We ought to have two clowns, you know."

But the glowing picture of the two clowns did not appeal to Fat's imagination.

"Naw," he whined. "If anybody else is goin' to be clown, *I* don't want to."

Accordingly Fat was awarded the clownship, and you said you'd just as lief be contortionist, which he *couldn't* be.

Clowns were really a drug on the market. Not a boy but aspired to the chair, and it required no little tact to steer them into other lines.

The organization, as finally effected, was as follows:

Hen, ringmaster.

You, contortionist.

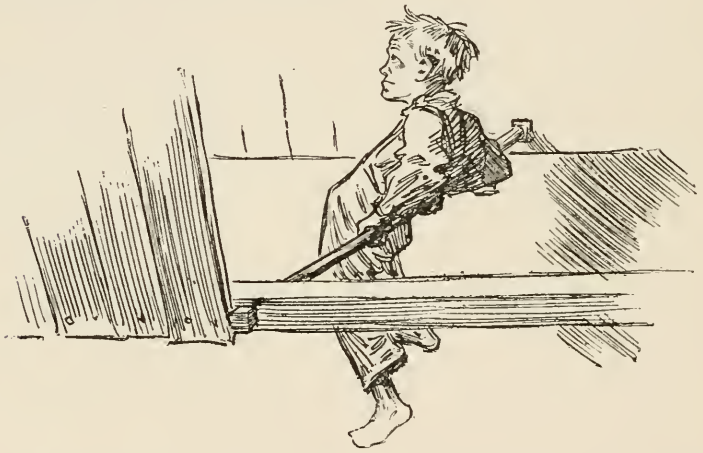
Billy, who could hang by his toes and do other things on the trapeze, and who, as a tumbler, could stand on his head (sometimes) without touching his hands.

Tom, who could do things on the trapeze, and who was a juggler learning to keep three balls going in the air.

Nixie, who also could do things on the trapeze, and who was an aspiring (and at times almost an *ex*piring) clothes-line walker.

Fat, who could wiggle his ears.

Snoopie, indefatigable, marvelous, a genius of one suspender, whom a special providence seemed to have endowed.



Menagerie (in prospect): Don, your dog; Snap, the Kemps' dog; Lunt's cat; Fat's white rats; Hen's "bantie" rooster.

A rehearsal was not only unnecessary, but impracticable as well; that is, a rehearsal in company. However, individual practice went on daily, and not a member of the troupe but emulated the most daring feats produced under Barnum's tent, as could be testified to by the

most casual observer, and by that emergency Band of Mercy, the Sisterhood of Mothers, adepts with court-plaster and needle.

"Oh, John!" sighed your own mother. "How *do* you manage to tear your pants so! This is the third time, and in the very same place! Can't you be careful?"

"I'm practisin' splits," you offered.

"'Splits'?" repeated mother, densely ignorant.

"Yes. You straddle, and you keep on straddlin', and see how near you can come to sittin'; and you've got to get up again without usin' your hands. There was a man and woman and little girl and boy no bigger 'n me in the circus

that could go clear down till they touched. I can 'most do it."

"John!" exclaimed mother, in horror. Then she noted something else. "And your waist, too!"

You condescended to explain farther.

"Yes; I tumbled off the trapeze when I was swingin'. Look here!" Pulling up your sleeve you proudly exhibited an elbow. It was an elbow that earned you distinction among your comrades, although Nixie had a knee which he boasted was "skinned" much worse.

The date of the circus was set for Wednesday afternoon, and that morning a show-bill, tacked upon the Schmidt front gate-post, announced it to all the world.

All the little girls of the neighborhood were by turns flippant and wheedling, and boys, your rivals, were positively libelous in their derision.

Schmidt's barn-loft had long been empty of hay and tenanted chiefly by spiders and rats and mice. It was a splendid place for the circus, a commodious tent being lacking.

Throughout the morning you and Hen, assisted by your associate performers, labored like

fury, a profound secrecy enveloping your operations. No one except Billy's small brother (he having sacredly been sworn "not to tell," an investiture of confidence that gave him a decided strut) was admitted to gaze upon the advance proceedings; but the noise of hammering and other preparations was carried afar, together with a cloud of dust out of the open loft door.

"Where was your parade?" asked father at noon, when, hot and excited and somewhat grimy, you feverishly attacked your well-heaped plate.

"Didn't have any," you mumbled. "Fat wouldn't let us take his rats out on the street, 'cause he said they'd get away; and, besides, we didn't have wagons enough for all the cages."

But to the timid inquiries of the little girls during the morning you had replied boldly:

"There ain't goin' to be any parade. Of course there ain't! Do you s'pose we're goin' to let everybody see what we got?"

At half-past one o'clock the public was invited to ascend. The ticket-taker was Billy's small brother aforesaid, and never was receiving-

teller of a national bank more vigilant or particular.

"You didn't gimme only nine!" he would accuse shrilly. "You didn't, either! You didn't, either! You've got to gimme another pin or you sha'n't come in!"

"I gave you ten! I did! I did! Didn't I, Susie? You dropped one."

Peace would be restored by the number being made up through the prodigality of a friend, and the ruffled damsel would pass in.

Your mother and Hen's mother, and your hired girl, and the Schmidt hired girl arrived together, their appearance causing a flurry and contributing to the circus the importance due it. Mrs. Schmidt panted heavily after the toilsome climb, — she was a large, short-winded woman, — and, choosing a seat near the door, fanned herself vigorously.

A few boys, after poking their heads above

the floor and grinningly surveying the scene, ended by trooping in with apologetic and bantering mien. But in the main the spectators were feminine.

The amphitheater, constructed of boards laid across boxes, in two lines, slowly filled. As the etiquette of the profession required that circus-performers not be seen until the time for their act, you and Hen and the other stars remained in close seclusion, huddled in the dressing-room — the far corner, veiled by a calico curtain (from the Schmidt clothes-press) tacked to convenient rafters. Meanwhile the public might enjoy the collection arrayed at one side of the loft, where was conspicuously exposed the sign, in white chalk: "Managerie."

In a soap-box with slats across the front wrathfully crouched Lunt's gaunt gray Thomas-cat, who had been rudely awakened from a matutinal slumber in the Lunt cellar and ignominiously confined. At regular intervals he uttered an appealing, protesting "Yow!" while he glared through his bars.

Next to him was Hen's red "bantie," also in a soap-box, but more composed.

Then came Don, for whom no cage procurable

was ample enough; so he was tied to a nail, which afforded him liberty to fawn impartially upon old and young, and occasionally to make frantic endeavors to reach you in the dressing-room.

Next to him was Snap, the Kemps' black-and-tan, miserable in close quarters; and at the end of the row, quaking in abject terror over the proximity of so many enemies, were Fat's precious white rats.

"Is *that* all the m'nag'rie you kids got? Aw, gee!" sneered the invidious boys among the spectators.

"It's more'n *you* got, anyhow!" you and Hen retorted from your covert.

"Don't you touch those rats!" commanded Fat, with a jealous eye out for meddling fingers. "They're my rats."

It was very hard restraining the members of the troupe in their quarters until time was ripe. Fat, his face streaked in red and white water-colors, and wearing a costume devised by his mother from large-figured calico, was wild to exhibit himself; and Snoopie, bursting with prowess, demanded careful watching or he would anticipate the program.

"Stay in here, darn you! You've all got to wait till the ringmaster says to come."

"Let go of me, will you!"

"You sha'n't go out! 'Tain't your circus!"

"Who's goin' out!"

Signs of revolt manifested themselves.

"Why don't you begin?"

"Gee, I'm hot!"

"If you don't begin pretty soon I'm goin' home, and I'll take my rats, too!"

So, urged from behind, Ringmaster Hen stalked forth and announced:

"We're ready to begin now."

He swaggered and magnificently cracked his whip — a treasure consisting of a double length of leather lash, cut by the shoemaker from a

square of oak calf, with a twine snapper and a skilfully whittled stock.

Fat Day, needing no second summons, immediately bolted out. He gamboled and pranced and grimaced and "wiggled" his ears, to the applause of the amphitheater and the tremendous excitement of the menagerie.

"Lem*me!* It's my turn!" besought Snoopie.

"No, lem*me!*" implored Nixie.

"You said *I* could go first, didn't you, John?" reminded Billy.

Privately, you thought that the honor should be yours; but you waived your rights as proprietor and decreed:

"Yes, let Billy go first, 'cause I promised."

Out went Billy and distinguished himself by all the feats in his repertoire, after each one saluting with the expansive gesture of the real professional. Having exhausted the trapeze, and having poised for a breathless instant on his head, he finished by vaulting over three saw-horses, in lieu of elephants, and plunging into the dressing-room.

"Now *I*'m goin'," asserted Snoopie.

"Naw; it's my turn!" opposed Tom and Nixie together.

But Snoopie shoved between them and past you, and was in the ring.

Snoopie Mitchell — ragged, wandering, independent, but at times despised Snoopie — was as one inspired. Never before had he such a circle of witnesses, and the wine went to his brain.

He flip-flopped frontward clear across the loft from the dressing-room corner into Mrs. Schmidt's lap, and flip-flopped backward to the dressing-room again; and bowed. He walked about on his hands; and bowed. He stood on his head ("That ain't fair!" called Billy. "I did that!") longer than Billy did, and while in that position spit, besides; and bowed. He did the "splits" farther than you could, and kissed his hand, while the spectators murmured various acknowledgments of his posture.

He rubbed his palms and lightly sprang to the trapeze dangling from the beam.

He skinned the cat, but he skinned it twice, and half into the third, and impishly hung poised, while his shoulder-joints cracked and the Schmidt hired girl moaned:

"Howly saints!"

He hung by his toes and threw wide his

arms; but, suddenly letting go, with preconceived adroitness fell on his back, amidst muffled shrieks.

He chinned himself, but he did it ten times.

"Come in! That's enough!" you ordered.

He obeyed you not. Instead, he hung by his knees; he hung by one elbow and swayed and kicked; he straddled the bar and went around it faster and faster; and with feet between hands, soles against it, he went around that way, too.

In the dressing-room reigned despair and lamentation.

"'Tain't fair!" wailed Tom, hotly. "I was goin' to do some of those things myself."

"So was I!" declared Nixie.

Snoopie was now juggling balls while traversing the official tight rope stretched between two of the saw-horses.

"Make him come in, Hen!" you called.

Hen snapped his whip at Snoopie's bare legs, and brought him to the boards.

"Quit, will you!" snarled Snoopie. "Don't you go whippin' *me*, or I'll paste you!"

"You darned old fool!" you scolded.

He wiggled his ears — wiggled them much more than Fat could his — and twitched his scalp, accommodatingly turning to right and to left so that all might see.

Then, breathless, crimson, perspiring, he walked on his hands into the dressing-room.

"What did you do all that for?" demanded you, angrily.

"Do what?" retorted Snoopie. "*I* didn't do nothin'! What's the matter with you kids, anyhow?"

"You did, too!" berated Nixie. "You showed off an' spoilt everything. *I* ain't goin' out."

"Don't you — an' we won't, either!" chorused Tom and Billy.

"Oh, Jock! Fat's got his rats and he's takin' 'em away with him!" announced Hen.

"You come back, there, Fat! Darn you! bring them back!" you cried, rushing to the rescue.

Too late. Fat was stamping rebelliously down the stairs. The disintegration of Schmidt

& Walker's United Shows, through jealousy, had begun.

"Aren't you fellows comin' out?" queried Hen.

"Uh-uh! 'T ain't any fun," grunted Billy, spokesman.

"They say they won't play any more," you reported to Hen.

"I guess that's all, then," stated Hen to the spectators.

With high hoots from the boys, and rustling of dresses from the ladies, the amphitheater was emptied.

"*I* didn't do nothin'," insisted Snoopie, grinning. "You needn't go to blamin' *me!*"

But nobody answered him; and with a derisive, "Ya-a-a! Your old show ain't worth shucks!" he scampered below, to join riotous, admiring spirits elsewhere.

"How was the circus?" asked father, politely, at supper.

"Aw, Snoopie Mitchell spoilt it," you accused.

"What was the matter with Snoopie?"

"Why, he went and did everything 'fore the rest had any chance — didn't he, mama!" you asserted.

"Is that so?"

Father glanced at mother, and they exchanged a subtle smile.

"What's become of the receipts?" he inquired.

You did not comprehend.

"Papa means the pins you took in," explained mother.

"Oh, I dunno," you responded, your chief interest just now being in your dish of strawberries.

WHEN YOU RAN AWAY

WHEN YOU RAN AWAY

Oh, the noble king of France,
He had ten thousand men;
He marched them up the hill one day
And he marched them down again.

FATHER and mother not only cherished the idea that "it was good for boys to have some work to do," but they cherished it in a distorted form. 'Twas not as though you were opposed to work, per se. No, indeed; there was a time for work and a time for play, and any day you would have been very willing to stay out of school and run errands or pile wood or rake up. Then, work would have been (just as your copy-book informed) a "privilege."

But witness: only Saturdays and after-school and vacation would do for that, and the privilege was changed into a hardship, with your father, from his security, recollecting what he did "when he was a boy," and evidently taking it out on you!

For "when he was a boy" father "had to

work," and rather vaingloriously (egotistically, to say the least) presented himself as a living, moving argument to apply to your case. However, he was of little weight with you because, privately, you bet with yourself that he never had to work as hard as you — never! Other fellows could skip off fishing, and everything, while *you*'d got to pile wood or rake the yard.

"Can I go fishin' to-morrow?"

With a bluffness cloaking sundry misgivings you laid the question before mother, hoping that she would unwittingly answer yes, and that you might entrap her into a family division. Alas, mother was not to be entrapped.

"Ask your father," she evaded, just as you had feared that she might.

So, reluctantly, you sought father.

"Well, John?" he prompted as you stood before him.

Sharpened to X-ray acuteness through strenuous sire-ship, he interpreted perfectly what was forthcoming.

"Can I go fishin' to-morrow?"

"But you have the yard to rake, you know, don't you?"

"I'll rake it after school next week."

The promise tumbled eagerly out for inspection, and father summarily condemned it.

"You promised that if I let you off last Saturday you'd rake it *this* week —"

"It rained," you faltered.

So it did. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday you had carefully reconnoitered, estimated, circled the prospect, so to speak; given the yard every chance within your power to rake itself, and thus add to nature phenomena; and then, on Friday, when you had got all ready, had come the rain, and balked your farther efforts.

Yes. You had done your best, and now was it for you or yours to discourage Providence? But father rashly plunged ahead.

"I guess you'd better rake and have it done with. Then you can go."

"I promised Snoopie and Fat I'd go to-morrow. Fishin' will be dandy to-morrow. It's always best right after a rain."

You had begun to whine.

"John!"

When father said "John!" in that tone, and with one exclamation-point, it indicated that your cause was finally and flatly dismissed. An

additional exclamation-point might mean committal for contempt. Accordingly, unwilling to provoke this, after sniffling a moment, on the safe side of his newspaper, and morosely kicking the porch railing, you stalked off, slamming behind you the inoffensive gate, and quite ripe for any desperate deed that could readily be undone, if necessary.

The next day dawned splendidly. Never was a better fishing day — never! Never would be another so good — never! Yet father and mother did not seem to care, and ate breakfast as indifferently as though raking the yard was fully as much fun for a boy as pulling out bullheads!

From in front somebody whistled persistently.

"There's Snoopie. He wants me to go," you reminded.

Still remained time for a revision of the program, if — if —

"I hear him," responded mother, mildly.

"Run out and tell him, so he won't wait," suggested father.

Enveloped in sorrow and shame you emerged to the impatient Snoopie and broke the news.

"I can't go. My father says I've got to rake the yard."

Snoopie stared in amaze. *He* never had any yard to rake, for his father was dead, or something, and his mother worked out by the day. He never had to change his clothes, and he could play hooky whenever he pleased. Sometimes you almost envied Snoopie.

"Aw, hang the old yard!" advised Snoopie, incredulous. "Come on. She's a daisy day."

"I can't," you confessed miserably.

"Pooh! You bet *I'm* goin', tho', all the samee! You're missin' it!"

And on he passed, whistling, with ostentatious blitheness, a disjointed tune, leaving you to lean disconsolately over the fence and remark him, and then to retire to face the flinty tyrants within.

You plumped into your breakfast chair, and ruthlessly banged your plate with your knife, and scowlingly bolted your food. But nobody appeared to notice. After breakfast the routine of the day was calmly taken up as usual. Father went down town, to business; mother bustled about household duties; Maggie the girl sang as she removed the breakfast dishes.

It seemed to be accepted as a matter of course that you should rake. For this was such a morning made — raking. You raked.

Higher rose the sun, and higher rose your wrath. Happily scratched the poultry, and viciously you scratched, with the rake. What was your life, anyway, but one unremitting round of coercion! Who cared whether you had any fun? Nobody! Other boys could do as they chose; but not you. No; not you. You were always being made to do things that you didn't want to do. You were nothing but a slave. And you would submit to it no longer.

The darned old fools! You would show them! You would run away!

Then — *then* (you hoped) would come upon that household the time when, gathered together, one member would say to another:

"I wish that Johnny was here."

"Yes," would confess father; "if he were only here he might go fishing whenever he pleased. I would be kinder to him; the yard could wait."

"And I, too," would quaver mother. "I understand, now. I used to send him after a

yeast-cake, and never think how tired he must be."

"And I'd never mind again his being in the kitchen," would sob Maggie the girl. "No, indeed. He should have all the cake and lumps of brown sugar he wanted."

"Oh, Johnny, Johnny!" would wail all. "Come back and try us once more. We'll be so different."

But they would plead too late. You would be far away; perhaps at the very moment dying, unknown, miserable, forlorn and forsaken; dying in the gutter or by the roadside, of starvation and exposure; and the people who found you would inquire, among themselves, pityingly:

"Who is he? Has he no friends?"

And the answer would be:

"None. He is only a poor little outcast, driven by abuse from home."

That would be a grand way to die, if only the household would know about it. Your eyes grew wet, while your heart swelled triumphant, as the picture took hold upon your sympathies.

The aroma of fresh cookies floated through the kitchen's open door. You were aware that

Maggie would be expecting you. When warm cookies were heralded, she had good reason to expect you. You hesitated, and for some time you held off, with the vague purpose of spiting her or your mother. If only one or the other would try to coax you in! But one or the other didn't. So, finally (the aroma proving beyond human endurance) you tramped moodily in, and from the fragrant pile abstracted a handful of the luscious disks.

Even as you did so you were proudly conscious that another cooky day, and the pile would await your coming, in vain. Very likely, after you were gone, they would not bake cookies any more. Or, if they did, the dough would be all salty with tears. Maybe, as an almost hopeless resort, mother would say:

"Maggie, bake cookies to-day just as you used to. Leave the door and windows open, and perhaps — who knows — our Johnny may be lingering about, and when he smells them baking he will understand that we are waiting and calling."

"Yes, ma'am — who knows?" would reply Maggie, chokingly.

You also, choked. For even then you would

be dead, dead, dead. You could die in a week, couldn't you?

You gulped down the last mouthful of warm cooky, and suddenly as you raked you waxed brighter. Why die? Why not live on, and become famous? Would not that be far better revenge? Some day, then, would reach household ears word of a new star in the firmament of glory; a name would be read, a name would be spoken, a name resounding through the whole world, name of intrepid explorer, dashing leader, multi-millionaire, potentate over savage peoples, what-not. And father would say to mother:

"Why — that's our Johnny!"

"It certainly is!" would exclaim mother.

And she would call Maggie, and all would discuss the strange tidings. Soon the village would be ringing with your exploits.

The household would send messages to you, of course, pleading for one sign of forgiveness; for a visit, a token. But you would return with scorn their missives, and ignore their entreaties.

Or would it not be well to heap coals of fire upon their heads? 'T was a difficult matter to decide.

At any rate, you would run away. That very

afternoon should witness you steadfastly plodding onward, face to the west, fortune and revenge before, ungrateful, cruel home behind. When tea was ready Maggie, and then mother, would summon you in vain.

Mother would say to father:

"Why, I can't find Johnny!"

"Oh, he'll come," would assert father.

But you wouldn't. They would eat supper without you; they would be alarmed; they would inquire among the neighbors; they would search up-stairs and down; nothing would give them a hint — or would it be a more subtle rôle to leave a note, a tear-stained note, with simply "Good-by" writ within? That was another point to be considered

However, the truth would dawn upon them. At first they would refuse to believe it. They would think:

"Oh, he'll be back. You see if he isn't."

You would *not* come back. Evening would merge into night — but no Johnny. The night would settle down; there would be weeping, running to and fro, searching and calling, and all the while you would be out in the dark and the dew (and it got cold, too, in the middle of

the night) at the mercy of storm and prowling beasts.

When came the morn, it would find the household red-eyed, distraught, and repentant — but still no Johnny.

Possibly the minister, in church, would refer to you during his sermon; not mentioning outright your name, because that would be too direct and hard upon your folks, but nevertheless by an allusion that should be unmistakable. The congregation would know to what he was referring, and all would turn and look at the family pew — the pew of shame.

Your desk at school would be empty. The news of your departure would spread about. Teacher would break down and cry when she reached your name in the roll-call, and as a mark of respect your seat would not be given to another, ever. It would remain untenanted, sacred, an object-lesson to parents. Maybe it would be draped with crape, like the desk of Harry Peters, who died. Say!

Yes, you would run away.

You were unusually quiet and subdued that noon, at dinner. It was the quietness of resolve, the subduedness of pity. Here was the

last meal that you ever should eat at this board — and none save yourself knew it. Ah, what a blow was about to fall upon the household. What a secret was locked within your breast.

It seemed almost a missed opportunity. If the folks might only suspect, and try to make advances. Then might you coolly rebuff them, deliberately freeze them out, torture them with shallow denials, and thus enjoy their suspicions while denying them your confidence.

But the meal progressed, and nobody acted curious. That made you mad.

"All raked, John?" asked father, kindly.

"Yes, sir."

You answered him as briefly as was possible and safe.

"That's good. Do you think he has earned a pair of white rabbits, mamma?"

White rabbits!

"He has been a very good boy, and worked hard," assured mother, smiling upon you.

"Well, we'll see," hinted father, also smiling.

Gee! White rabbits were a serious menace to your outworks. You perceived your defenses giving way. Stand firm, John; stand firm. You have resolved, you know; don't be lured

by tardy bribes. What are white rabbits to freedom, and revenge?

No, you will not be a traitor to yourself. Let the white rabbits come — but, like much else, they will come too late. There will be no John — no Johnny, no — no Johnny here to give them to. And you smile in sickly fashion and say nothing.

You have the afternoon before you, and your preparations to make. While, wilfully unconscious of your sinister purpose, the household again proceeds about its routine duties, you make ready. You will not carry much with you. Maybe you will take nothing at all. Shall you leave your drawers and your treasures untouched, and merely fade mysteriously from local ken, or shall you select articles enough to signify your decision?

Oliver Optic's boys, when escaping from the authority of a harsh step-father or uncle, went away with their possessions either slung over their shoulder, tied in a bandanna handkerchief, at the end of a stick, or else contained in a trunk toted by aid of a wheelbarrow.

With tears (tears well very easily) blurring your eyes and occasionally dropping from the

end of your nose, in your little room you hastily overhaul your belongings.

Upon the bed (dear little bed!) you spread a bandanna 'kerchief, and in it you place an extra pair of stockings and your best necktie, and — well, there doesn't seem to be much else worth taking, in the clothing line. A boy doesn't need much; one outfit can last a long time. Besides, the raggeder you get, the better, for the more pitiable will be your plight. Your pockets already hold your jack-knife and your jew's-harp, and thereto you add your burning-glass, and your cap-pistol (robbers and bears might not tell it from a real pistol) and a fish-line.

Cast one farewell look about the little room (dear little room!). It shall know you no more. Does it hate to see you go? But it mutely implores in vain. You settle your cap firmly upon your head, and stifling a sob over the pathos of it all you descend the stairs.

You stick the bandanna packet underneath your jacket. It would be nice if the household might suspect it, and still not see it. But the delicate medium is rather difficult to attain. Besides, it is too late for them to try to stop you, now.

Mother is in the sitting-room as you pass through the hall, kitchenward.

"Where are you going, Johnny boy?" she hails, cheerily.

"Nowhere," you falter. "Just off."

You pause, irresolutely, a second. If only you might be encouraged to go in to her, and with strange meaning in your caress kiss her, while she wondered at your tenderness; then in after days she would recall, and feel all the worse.

"Well, be sure and be home in time for supper. We're going to have hot biscuits and honey!"

What a callous way to let you depart!

Noting, with minute care, each familiar object — ah, those inanimate things; *they* know and feel bad! — you proceed into the kitchen. Here, right before Maggie's eyes, you boldly provision with two cookies and an apple. You reck not whether she sees, or not; the die is cast. You defiantly press on, straight out of the house, and through the back gate.

The deed is done. You have gone. You are in the alley, and many a long year will elapse before that back gate again swings to your hand.

You wish that the folks knew—but they dont'. Your heart aches for yourself; your going is so unheeded, the piteousness of it so wasted.

You grow angry, and stiffen your neck. All right; they need not care, if they don't want to. Perhaps they think you are fooling. You'll show them — yes, you'll show them! Oh, if they would only call after you, and beg you to turn, so that you *might* show them. You'd never even glance. The darned old fools!

You stanchly round the alley corner, and march away, down the street. Wild horses cannot drag you back. You wish they'd try.

Two whole blocks have you put behind you. Your stern pace lags a bit. With the sky so blue and the sun so bright and the maples o'erhead so rustly and the sidewalk so flecked with gold and the yards and houses along the way so comfortable and friendly, really, it is getting to be hard work keeping up steam. You have to think of it constantly, or your fires die down.

The darned — the darned old fools!

You have been longer in traversing this third block. Another block, and the maples and the sidewalk and the comfortable, friendly houses,

cease; the country begins. W-well, you'll go that far, anyhow.

D-darn 'em!

You have come to the end of the street; here is your Rubicon. You feel that once started upon that country road, with your handkerchief slung over your shoulder, then it *will* be too late! The idea rather awes you. It looks a long way, into the world. And dying does not, somehow, seem the attractive revenge that it once did. You slacken — and halt.

You take the bandanna packet from beneath your jacket, and inspect it.

Humph! Darn 'em, you meant it when you started, just the samee.

You uncertainly move forward again. If it wasn't for those white rabbits —. You walk slower. You blink hard. You stop, as if run down — which, in truth, you are. You blink, and finger the cookies in your jacket pocket.

Are the folks at home missing you? Supposing that they find out you have run away, and as a punishment deny you the white rabbits, after all! The thought stings. You hesitate, and sitting by the roadside eat the two cookies and the apple.

You are reminded that there are "biscuits and honey" for supper.

Perhaps — perhaps you have gone far enough. Perhaps you'd better not do "it," this time.

When, rather sheepishly, you reënter that back gate, you encounter no signs of confusion and agitation. Although it seems to you that you have been gone a long, long while, everything appears serene and just as you had left it. Nobody notices you.

You slip up-stairs. The little room welcomes you; you eye it diffidently, and challenge it to ridicule you; but it only welcomes.

You restore to their places burning-glass and pistol and fish-line. You untie the bandanna handkerchief, and return to their drawer the stockings and the best tie. You fold up the handkerchief itself, and put it away. You do not need them; not yet. You have changed your mind. But only they and you know what a narrow squeak of it this peaceful house has just had.

GOIN' FISHIN'

"'IT'S NOTHIN' BUT A SNAG!'"

GOIN' FISHIN'

IT was twenty feet long, and cost ten cents — a whole week's keeping-the-woodbox-filled wages. To select it from amid its sheaf of fellows towering high beside the shop entrance summoned all your faculties and the faculties of four critical comrades, assisted by the proprietor himself.

"That's the best of the lot," he encouraged, not uninfluenced by a desire to be rid of you.

So you planked down your money, and bore off the prize; and a beautiful pole it was — longer by three feet, as you demonstrated when they were laid cheek by jowl, than that of your crony Hen.

Forthwith you enthusiastically practised with it in the back yard, to show its capabilities, while the hired girl, impeded by its gyrations, fretfully protested that you were "takin' all outdoors."

Your father viewed its numerous inches and smiled.

You clothed it with hook and line, an operation seemingly simple, but calling for a succession of fearful and wonderful knots, and a delicate adapting of length to length.

Thereafter it always was ready, requiring no fitting of joint and joint, no adjustment of reel, threading of eye, and attaching of snell. In

"AT LAST YOU WERE OFF"

your happy-go-lucky ways you were exactly suited the one to the other.

During its periods of well-earned rest it reposed across the rafters under the peak of the woodshed, the only place that would accommodate it, although in the first fever gladly would you have carried it to bed with you.

Half the hot summer afternoon Hen and you dug bait, for you and he were going fishing on the morrow. Had you been obliged to rake the yard as diligently as you delved for worms you would have been on the verge (for the hundredth time) of running away and making the folks sorry; but there is such a wide gulf betwixt raking a yard and digging bait that even the blisters from the two performances are totally distinct.

With a prodigality that indicated at the least a week's trip, you plied your baking-powder can — the cupboard was continually stripped of baking-powder cans, in those days — with long, fat angle worms and short, fat grubs; and topping them with dirt to preserve their freshness, you set them away till the morning.

Then, with mutual promises to "be on time," Hen and you separated.

"I suppose," said father, gravely, to mother, across the table, at supper, "that I needn't order anything at Piper's (Piper was the butcher) for a few days."

"Why so?" asked mother, for the moment puzzled.

"We'll have fish, you know."

"Sure enough!" agreed mother, enlightened, and glancing at you. "Of course; Johnny's going fishing."

From your end of the table you looked keenly at the one and at the other and pondered. If the show of confidence in you was genuine, how gratified and proud you felt! But was it? Father went on soberly eating; mother, transparent soul, smiled at you, as if in reparation, and winked both eyes.

You grinned confusedly, and bent again to your plate. Yes, they were making fun of you. But who cared! And you had mental revenge in the thought that perhaps you'd *show* them.

You turned in early, as demanded by the strenuous day ahead. To turn you out no alarm-clock was necessary. The sun himself was just parting the pink hangings of the east, and on earth apparently only the roosters and robins were astir, when, with a hazy recollection of having fished all night, you scrambled to the floor and into your clothes.

Mother's voice sounded gently outside the door.

"Johnny?"

"Yes; I'm up."

"All right. I was afraid you might oversleep. Now be careful to-day, won't you, dear?"

Again you assured her. You heard her soft steps going back down the stairs. She never failed to make your rising her own, both to undertake that you should not be disappointed and to deliver a final loving caution.

Your dressing, although accompanied by sundry yawns, was accomplished quickly, your attire for the day being by no means complicated. Your face and hair received what Maggie, the girl, would term "a lick and a promise," and kitchenward you sped.

To delay to eat the crackers and milk that had been provided was a waste of time; but you had been instructed, and so you gobbled them down. On the kitchen table was your lunch, tied in shape convenient to stow about your person. It was a constant fight on your part with mother to make her keep your lunches at the minimum. Had she her way, you would have traveled with a large basket; and what boy wanted to be bothered with baskets and pails and things?

Upon the back porch, where you had stationed them in minute preparation, had been

awaiting you all night the can of bait and the loyal pole. You seized them. Provisioned and armed, you ran into the open and looked expectantly for Hen.

From Hen's house came no sign of life. You whistled softly; no Hen. Your heart sank. Once or twice before Hen had failed you. Affairs at his house seemed to be not so systematized as at yours.

You whistled louder; no Hen. You called, your voice echoing along the still somnolent street.

"All right," suddenly responded Hen, sticking his head out of his window.

He was not even up!

You were disgusted. One might as well not go fishing as to start so late and have all the other fellows there first; and you darned "it" gloomily.

After seemingly an age, but with his mouth full and with other tokens of haste, Hen emerged from the side door.

"Bridget promised to call me and she forgot to wake up," he explained.

Had Hen *your* mother, he would have been better cared for. But, then, households differ.

At last you were off, your jacket, necessary as a portable depository, balanced with lunch, and the can of worms snugly fitted into a pocket, over the hard-boiled eggs; your mighty pole, become through many pilgrimages a veteran, sweeping the horizon; and your gallant old straw, ragged of contour and prickly with broken ends, courting, like some jaunty, out-at-the-elbow, swash-buckler cavalier, every passing breeze.

As you and Hen hurried along, how you chattered, the pair of you, with many a brag and "I bet you" and bit of exciting hearsay! How big you were with expectations!

"By jinks! I pity the fish to-day!" bantered "Uncle" Jerry Thorne, hoe in hand in his garden patch, stiffly straightening to watch you as you pattered by.

You did not answer. Onward stretched your way. Moments were precious. Who could tell what might be happening ahead at the fishing-place? Busier cackled the town hens, into view rolled the town's sun, from town chimneys here and there idly floated breakfast smoke. The town was entering upon another day, but you—ah, you were destined afar and you must not stay.

To transport your pole, at times inclined to be unruly, with its line ever reaching out at mischievous foliage and its hook ever leaving butt or cork and angling for clothing, was an engineering feat demanding no slight ingenuity. The board walk, which later would be baking hot, so that the tender soles of barefooted little girls would curl and shrink and seek the grass, was gratefully cool, blotched as it was with dampness from the dripping trees. When the walk ceased, the road lay moist and velvety, the path was wet and cold, the fringing bushes spattered you with diamonds, and the lush turf, oozing between your toes, gave to your eager tread.

Rioted thrush and woodpecker and all their feathered cousins; higher into the silver-blue sky climbed the sun, donning anon his golden robes of state; one last impatient halt, to extract your hook from your coat collar, and now, your happy legs plashed knee over with dew and clinging dust, you had reached your goal.

You and Hen were not the first of the day's fishermen. As the vista of bank and water unfolded before your roving eyes you descried a rival already engaged. By his torn and sag-

ging brim, by his well-worn shirt, by his scarred and faded overalls, draggling about his ankles and dependent upon one heroic strap, you recognized a familiar. It was Snoopie — Snoopie Mitchell, who always was fishing, because he never had to ask anybody's permission.

"'JUS' A BULLHEAD'"

Snoopie's flexible life appeared to you the model one.

"Hello, Snoop!" called you and Hen.

"Hello!" responded Snoopie, phlegmatically, desisting a moment from watching his cork, as he squatted over his pole.

"Caught anything yet?"

"Jus' come," vouchsafed Snoopie. "They ain't bitin' much. But yesterday — gee! you ought to've been here yesterday!"

No doubt; that usually was the way when you had to stay at home.

You tugged your bait from its tight lodgment; you peeled off your coat and tossed it aside as you would a scabbard; with feverish fingers, lest Hen should beat you, hopeful that you might even outdo Snoopie, you unwrapped your gallant pole of its line, and selecting a plump worm, slipped it, despite its protesting squirms, adown the hook.

The favorite stands at this resort were marked by their colonies of tinware — bait-cans cast away upon the grass and mud, some comparatively bright and recent, many very rusty and ancient, their unfragrant sighs horrifying the summer zephyrs. You sought *your* stand and threw in.

From his stand Hen also threw in.

An interval of suspense ensued. The placid water was full of delightful possibilities. What glided therein that *might* be caught! You besought your bobber with a gaze almost hypnotic;

but the bobber floated motionless and obdurate.

"Snoopie's got a bite!"

At the announcement you darted apprehensive glances in Snoopie's direction. You were greedy enough to harbor the wish — but, ah!

"Snoopie's got one! Snoopie's got one!"

Snoopie's pole had energetically reared upward and backward, and, as if at its beckoning, something small, black, and glistening had popped straight out from the glassy surface before and had flown high into the brush behind.

Snoopie rushed after, and Hen and you discarded everything and rushed, too.

"Jus' a bullhead!"

So it was, and quite three inches long.

Snoopie ostentatiously strung it on a bit of cord and tethered it, at the water's edge, to a stake. Then he threw in again and promptly caught another.

Somehow, Snoopie invariably did this. He was lucky in more respects than one.

From each side Hen and you sidled toward him and put your bobbers as near his as you dared.

"G'wan!" objected Snoopie, with shrill em-

phasis. "What you kids comin' here for? Go find your own places. I got this first."

Presently, to your agony, Hen likewise jerked out an astonished pout.

"Ain't you had any bites yet?" he fired triumphantly at you.

"How deep you got your hook?" you replied.

Hen held his line so that you might see. To miss no chances, you measured accurately with a reed. Once more you adjusted your cork, moving it up a fraction of an inch, and you spat on your baited hook.

Again you threw in, landing your now irresistible lure the length of your pole and line from the shore.

"Quit your splashin'!" remonstrated Snoopie. "I had a dandy bite, an' you scared him away. Darn you! can't you throw in easy?"

The ripples caused by your bobber widened in concentric circles and died. You watched and waited. A kingfisher dived from his post upon a dead branch, and rising with a minnow in his bill to show you how easy it was, dashed away, laughing derisively.

With a quick exclamation, Hen swished aloft the tip of his pole.

"Golly! but I had a big nibble! He took the cork clear under!" he cried.

You wondered fiercely why *you* couldn't have a nibble.

As if in answer to your mute prayer, your bobber quivered, spreading a series of little rings. An electric thrill leaped through your whole body, and your fingers tightened cautiously around the well-warmed butt, which they had been caressing in vain.

"I've got a bite! I've got a bite!" you called gleefully.

Hen and Snoopie turned their faces to witness what might take place.

Then your cork was stricken with intermittent palsy, and then it staggered and swung as though it had a drop too much. Your sporting blood aflame, you bided the operations of the rash meddler who was causing this commotion.

The cork tilted alarmingly, so that the water wetted it all over. With a jump and a burst of pent-up energy (no cat after a mouse could be quicker), you whipped the heavens with your great pole; but only an empty hook followed after.

"Shucks!" you lamented.

"Aw, you jerked too soon!" criticised Snoopie.

"Darn him! he ate all my bait, anyhow!" you declared. "See?"

"'BITIN' AGAIN'"

With utmost speed you fitted another worm and very smoothly let down exactly in the same spot.

Scarcely had the cork settled when it resumed its erratic movements. Its persecutor, whatsoever he might be, was a persistent chap.

"Bitin' again?" inquired Snoopie, noting your strained attitude.

You nodded; the moment was too vital to admit of conversation.

"I got him! I got him! I—"

You had exulted too soon. Out like a feather you had whisked the meddlesome fellow, but in mid-air, unable to maintain the sudden pace, he parted company with the impaling steel. Down he dropped, and while the lightened hook went on without him he dived into the shallows where mud meets water.

You abandoned your pole; you plunged after him. Upon hands and knees you wallowed and grappled with him. With fish instinct, he was wriggling for the deeps and safety. You grasped him. He slid through your clutch. You grabbed at him again and obtained a pinching hold on his tail. He broke the hold and was off.

"Get him!" shrieked Snoopie.

"Get him!" shrieked Hen.

Desperately you scooped up the slime. Once more you had him. He stabbed you with his needle-like spines, but you flinched not. You hurled him inshore and tore after, not allowing him an instant's respite.

There! He lay gasping upon the drier bank. He had lost, and out of his one piggish eye not plastered shut he signaled surrender.

Of the two parties to the wrestle you were much the muddier.

"How big?" queried Hen, anxiously.

"Oh, 'bout as big as the first one Snoop caught," you replied, which was strictly the truth.

You devoted a few seconds to squeezing your pricked thumb; then pleasantly aware that several new arrivals were viewing your success, you gingerly strung him and deposited him, thus secured, in his native element. Here he flopped a moment, but finding his efforts useless, sulked out of sight.

You baited up; you were more contented.

Two pole-lengths from shore occurred a quick splash and a swirl.

"Gee!" burst simultaneously from the three of you; and you stared with wide eyes at the spot where the bubbles were floating.

"What was that?" ejaculated Hen.

"A big bass, I bet you," averred Snoopie.

Nobody — within your memory, at least — ever had actually caught a "big bass" in these

haunts, but upon various occasions, such as the present one, he had made himself known. To doubt his existence was heresy. He was here; of course he was. Nearly to see him was an exploit accomplished by many; nearly to catch him was accomplished by only a few less: but really to haul him out had been accorded to none.

In the meantime he cruised about, in his mysterious way, and now and then made a rumpus on the surface, to wring a tribute of hungry "Gees!" from the astounded spectators of his antics.

You gripped closer your pole and barely breathed. Perhaps he was heading in your direction; perhaps, at last, he would accept your worm, and, glory! *you* would be the boy to carry him through town, and home! Could anything be more deliriously grand?

On the other hand, misery! perhaps he was heading for Snoopie or Hen. However, he might turn aside.

Silence reigned; the atmosphere was tense with expectation. Another swirl, a small one, off a brush-pile nearer the shore, just to your left. Cautiously you tiptoed down there and craftily introduced your tempting hook.

The cork vibrated. For an instant you lost your breath. The cork dipped. You poised, rigid but alert, daring to stir not even a toe. The cork righted, dipped again, and slowly, calmly sank into the pregnant depths.

Furiously you struck. Your good pole bent and swayed. You were wild with excitement.

"Say! Look there! Look at John!" exclaimed Hen.

"Hang on to him! Don't let him get away!" bawled Snoopie.

Spurred by your down-curving pole and your violent endeavors, they scampered madly to your succor.

"Don't you give him slack!" instructed Snoopie. "He'll get loose!"

"Don't bust the pole, either!" warned Hen.

As for you, you were fighting with all your strength. The line was taut, sawing the water, as valiantly you hoisted with the writhing tip. Your antagonist yielded a few inches, only to demand them back again. You were in deadly fear lest the hook would not hold. You hoped that he had swallowed it. But who might tell?

At any rate, you were determined that he

should not have a vestige more of line if *you* could help it.

"Can you feel him?" asked Hen.

"Uh huh," you panted affirmatively.

"Gim*me* the pole," ordered Snoopie.

You shook your head. You wanted to do it all yourself.

Little by little, in response to the relentless leverage that you exerted, your victim was being dragged to the surface. Higher and higher was elevated your pole, and the wet line followed. The cork appeared and left the water. Victory was almost yours, but you would not relax.

"It's nothin' but a snag!" denounced Snoopie.

You would not believe. It was — if it was not the big bass, it was something else wonderful.

A second — and up through the heaving area upon which were fixed your eyes broke a black stem. Swifter it exposed itself, and suddenly you had hoisted into the sunlight an ugly old branch, soaked and dripping, wrenched by your might from the peaceful bed where it long had lain.

Amid irritating jeers you swung it to shore.

"Well, I *had* something all right — and it was a bass, too; and he snagged my hook on

me. He took the bobber under in less'n no time, I tell you!" you argued defensively.

That was a favorite trick of the "big bass" and other prodigies of these waters — to be

"YOU LUXURIOUSLY DINED"

almost caught and to escape by cleverly snagging the hook.

Hen and Snoopie returned to their stations. You ruefully twisted your hook from the rotten wood and tried in a new place for bullheads.

You tired of this location and changed to a log; and tiring of the log, you changed to a rock; and tiring of the rock, you changed to a jutting bank; and tiring of the bank, you waded into the shallows, where, at least, the flies could not torment your legs. In the course of your wanderings your can toppled; you snatched at it but it evaded you, gurgled, and gently sank beneath. You borrowed bait from more or less unwilling brethren, or appealed to the most respectable of the riffraff cans scattered about. From the zenith the sun glared down upon your neck, and from the water the sun glared up into your face, and neck and face waxed red and redder; turtles poked their heads forth and inspected you; and dragon-flies darted at your bobber and settled upon it, giving you starts as you thought for an instant that you had a bite. You pricked your fingers on the "stingers" of vengeful victims, and you cut your feet on tin and shell and sharp root and branch; you luxuriously dined on butter-soaked bread and saltless eggs (the salt being spilled), and you drank of water which, in these scientific later days, we know with horror to have been alive with deadly bacilli; and Snoopie, lying on his back, with his

hat over his eyes, tied his line to his big toe and went to sleep.

Finally, spotted with mud and mosquito-bumps, scarlet with burn and bristling with experiences, in the sunset glow homeward you trudged, over your shoulder your faithful pole, and your hapless spoil, ever growing drier and dustier and more wretched, dangling from your hand.

"Mercy, John! What *do* you bring those home for!" expostulated mother, from a safe distance surveying your catch, none thereof longer than a clothes-pin.

"Why, to eat," you explained.

And she fried them for you, her very self.

IN SOCIETY

IN SOCIETY

YOU looked fine; simply fine! And well you might, for had you not just gone through with the ordeal of an extra bath — a process which even when regular and weekly nagged you almost beyond endurance, and now as a superfluity certainly ought to bring recompense. It seemed to you that if a boy went swimming summers, during the season intervening a good scrubbing as far as half-way down his neck should answer all purposes.

With your face shining like a red apple, with your hair slickly brushed — by mother, and your fresh waist neatly adjusted — by mother, and your Sunday jacket and knickerbockers faithfully brushed — by mother, and your shoes blacked and harmoniously buttoned — by mother again, there you stood between mother's knees while she coaxed into an expansive knot your blue polka-dotted tie.

Then she turned you about for inspection.

"Well, well!" commented father, in acknowledgment of your effect.

Mother settled your hat delicately upon your smooth crown.

"Now, be a good boy," she cautioned. "Be polite, and don't be rough in your play, and remember to say good-night to Helen and her mama, and don't act greedy when the things to eat are passed."

She kissed you, and father kissed you, and escorted to the front door out you strutted.

"Be a good boy!" called mother after you.

You decorously yodeled for Hen; Hen, arrayed, like you, in purple and fine linen, decorously made exit and joined you; and decorously the two of you walked side by side up the street, bound for the "Daner party."

Along the way, restrained by your feeling of spick-and-spanness from customary gambolings, you and Hen sought relief in a preliminary review of the prospective menu.

"I bet you we have ice-cream — I seen Mr. Daner orderin' it!" avowed Hen, by his abundance of enthusiasm atoning for his lack of grammar.

"Gee! I hope it's chocolate!" you exclaimed.

"Or strawberry an' vaniller mixed!" supplemented Hen, with a smack of anticipation.

You "geed" again, and offered an unvoiced prayer that, whatever the flavor or flavors, the dishes be large.

On ahead was disclosed the house of the party. It was lighted from top to bottom, and at the impressive sight your courage, buoyed in vain by ice-cream, chocolate, or strawberry and vanilla mixed, began to sink.

"You go in first," you suggested to Hen.

"Naw, sir! *You!*" objected Hen. "You know 'em better'n I do."

"But I'll keep right close behind. Honest, I will," you promised.

"You wouldn't, either. You'd run off and leave me alone!" accused Hen, suspicious and diffident.

With the question of precedence still unsettled, slowly and more slowly you and he approached. Hanging to the palings of the fence, in front, were the luckless (and invidious) uninvited; among them Snoopie Mitchell, of course. Snoopie never missed anything, if within his reach, and he wore the same clothes wherever

he went, be it fishing or into the *crème de la crème* of civilization.

Your arrival was the signal for a shrill chorus of jeering cries; why, nobody may know; yet they caused you to flush with an unreasonable sense of shame.

"Hello, Jocko!" greeted Snoopie, affably (Jocko, and not, as stated the family Bible, John, being your actual name).

"Hello!" you responded feebly.

"Hello, Hen!" continued Snoop, determined to be impartial.

"Hello!" said Hen, also feebly.

"Ain't you goin' in?" queried Snoop. "G'wan in! What you 'fraid of?"

"G'wan in yourself!" you retorted.

"Well, I would if I was dressed up, you bet!" asserted Snoopie — oblivious of the fact that he was not expected.

"Huh!" scoffed Hen. "You ain't invited! Ya-a-ah!"

"I know it; but I could have been if I'd wanted to!" declared Snoopie, insinuating his superiority. "I wouldn't go to their old party!"

"Good reason why!" scoffed you and Hen.

This brief exchange of courtesies having been

accomplished, attended by mocking tongues and glances you two proudly entered the gate, leaving on the outside these your social inferiors, and advancing up the walk, studiously elbow to elbow, mounted the porch steps.

"You ring!" insisted Hen.

"No! You!"

Whereupon, in the midst of the discussion the listening door opened, and into the dazzling interior you sidled together, and red as peonies received your welcome.

On the one side of the parlor were clustered the girls, a close corporation in stiff little dresses and stiff big sashes, and locks wonderfully curled or tied with ribbons. They whispered and giggled. On the opposite side were banded the boys, in embarrassing Sunday clothes and squeaky shoes. And they whispered and sniggered.

Betwixt this side of the parlor and that stretched a seemingly impassable chasm, which must be bridged. Upon busy Mrs. Daner, engineer-in-chief of the occasion, devolved the task of establishing communication.

"Clap-in and clap-out!" she heralded briskly.

The little girls were hustled, still giggling, into the adjoining room, and the folding doors were drawn. You boys waited. Presently the doors parted for a crack, and Mrs. Daner, as official announcer, called, between them:

"Harry Peters!"

"Aw, Harry!" derided you all. Assisted by obliging hands, Harry stumbled through the crack, and the doors met behind him. You in the outer room listened breathlessly. An instant — and then came a tremendous burst of clapping and laughter, and Harry, blushing and flustrated, plunged back into your midst.

"Aw, Harry! Got clapped out! Aw, Harry!"

"I did it on purpose!" averred Harry, stoutly. "I guess *I* knew. I don't want any girl kissin' *me*, you bet!"

"Henry Schmidt!" summoned Mrs. Daner.

Hen, being notoriously afraid of girls, must have blindly plumped down into the very first chair available, for scarcely had he entered ere out he fled, headlong, in dire confusion, before a volley of gay voices and staccato palms.

"Johnny Walker!"

That was you. You had been hoping, and now you had arrived. Beset by the usual

ridicule — Harry and Hen the leaders in it — reluctantly, after all, you left the safe society of your fellows, and slipping through the fateful crack uncertainly looked about you.

The atmosphere was distinctly feminine. Fourteen little girls stood each behind an empty chair, in almost a circle, and eyed you roguishly. Nobody spoke. You felt as graceful as a hippopotamus and twice as large.

Your wandering glance fell upon Mary Webster. Mary nodded invitingly. And upon Lucy Rogers. Lucy stared at you with intense soberness.

"Hurry up, Johnny. Choose a chair," urged Mrs. Daner, she being, among her other functions, the discourager of hesitancy.

Poor soul, it devolved upon her to see that the programme moved forward swiftly, so that no one, from the belle and the beau to the fat and the cross-eyed, should be slighted through lack of time.

Mary had nodded. It must be Mary who had called for you; else why should she have nodded? With confidence you darted at Mary's chair, and seated yourself.

How they shrieked, and how they clapped;

none louder than Mary, and none more vengefully than Lucy — Lucy, who, in truth, had called you, and whom you had unwittingly exasperated. Boys are so stupid!

Another victim of female duplicity, out you dived for the refuge of your own sex. You resolved that sometime you would pay Mary Webster back.

Billy Lunt went in next. What befell Billy was signalized by a sudden uproar of laughter and soprano cries, but no clapping!

Billy was being kissed!

"A-a-aw, Billy!" and all of you pointed your fingers at him, and prodded him in the ribs, when, crimson and rumpled, he reappeared.

"Who kissed you?"

"Mary Webster; she tried to but she didn't do it square! I skinned out, an' they grabbed holt of me, an' I broke away!" boasted Billy.

After clap-in and clap-out was instituted post-office, and after post-office, drop-the-handkerchief, and after drop-the-handkerchief ensued King William, sung with whatever variations local tongues had given to the old, old rhyme:

King *Will*-yum was King *James's* son,
And he-e-e th' royal *race* did run;

Upo-o-on his breast he wore a sta-a-ar
Which pe-e-eople called the *sign* of war.
Now cho-o-ose the east, now cho-o-ose the west,
And cho-o-ose the one that *you* love best;
If *she's* not here to *take* your part,
Go cho-o-ose another with *all* your heart.
Down *on* this carpet *you* must kneel,
As su-u-ure's th' grass grows *in* the field —

and then, as everybody knows, you are supposed to "kiss your sweet," and "rise up*on* your feet." Some couples kissed, but some wouldn't.

The gulf 'twixt the boy and the girl factions has long since been effectually spanned. Mindful of Mary's meanness in befooling you into accepting her inhospitable chair, you devote yourself to Lucy. At first Lucy is lukewarm, and with a pout of distaste only languidly pursues you after you have deposited the handkerchief behind her. You obey a command to "bow to the wittiest, kneel to the prettiest, and kiss the one you love the best," but although this last honor you would bestow upon Lucy, and struggle desperately to salute her, she grants you merely the tip of an ear.

You persevere in your attentions, and by repeatedly twitching her hair-ribbon into disorderly streamers, you arouse her interest in you.

You chase her, screaming, up-stairs and down; and in return she, with screaming unabated, chases you down-stairs and up, and chastises you with playful little slaps and pinches.

Other couples are similarly engaged. Yet you all are "good," as goodness goes, among your generation.

Out of what is rapidly verging upon chaos, the summons to refreshments brings organization once more. The majority of the boys, comprising the ruder spirits and the so-to-speak unattached, gather in a corner, where it is each for himself and pillage your neighbor. The politer boys, which class includes yourself, stimulated to their duty by Mrs. Daner, attend upon the fair ladies.

You watch protectingly over Lucy, gallantly letting her have the largest piece of cake, although you covet it yourself, and essaying to practise other denials such as have been impressed upon your memory by your mother.

You and Lucy converse. Your "Gee! ain't this bully!" and her ecstatic response, "My! ain't it, though!" establish between you a delightful understanding. For her entertainment

you dexterously insert into your mouth a whole cookie.

"Oh, Johnny! How awful!" she sniggers.

The ice-cream is chocolate and vanilla, and everybody takes both. Hen seems not to be aggrieved by the absence of strawberry. Not being a ladies' man, he is in the corner with kindred souls, but you can hear him.

The dishes are large.

"Piggie!" upbraids Lucy, when, having been solicited, you accept a second. Nevertheless, she does not refuse a spoonful from it, now and then.

Last come the candies, amidst which are fascinating motto-wafers, always the source of much mirth and amusement.

All the company exchange mottoes. You and Lucy limit your operations chiefly to one another. For instance, you present her with a pink motto, shaped like a four-leaf clover, which says;

"Are you fickle-minded?"

"You are too stout!" replies Lucy, with a circular disk in cream color.

"Forget me not," you entreat — the words being done in red upon a white diamond.

"All in life is dear," answers Lucy, rather vaguely, with a greenish hexagon.

"Are you in earnest?" you query — a pink heart.

"Ask pa's consent," suggests Lucy, unmaidenly as the encouragement may appear, with an indented square.

You have to trade around among various friends before you can effectually respond. Sly Mary Webster supplies you with "Say now!" of which you immediately avail yourself.

"Will you marry me?" asks Lucy, dared thereto by companions, while those in the secret whoop and shriek at her boldness.

"Of course I will," you assure her, providentially possessing the very reply, on a yellow oval.

"That's what!" comments Lucy.

The remark deserves better, but the best that you can do is a "With all my heart," on a pink star.

The festivities of the evening are over. It is time to go home. Most of the mottoes have eventually been eaten, and the rest of them have been stuffed, along with other sweets, into greedy pockets. Already some of the girls have

been called for by kinspeople, and some of the boys have scrambled through the hall, and noisily fled into the street. You encounter Lucy at the foot of the stairs, and hastily thrust into her hand a motto that you have been saving — a fine shamrock in yellow, which says for you:

"May I see you home to-night?"

There is a motto-wafer with a mitten on it; has Lucy one, and will she be moved to give it to you, as a mischievous rebuff? No; lacking ready answer, she only giggles and attempts to pass on.

"But may I? I ain't foolin' — truly I ain't!" you beseech, husky in the stress of the moment.

"*I* don't care," calls back Lucy, half-way up the flight.

And so, much to the disgust of Hen, who had counted upon your society going as well as coming, you "saw her home" in the most exemplary fashion — you keeping to one edge of the walk, and she to the other, and between your parallel routes space for a coach and four.

"Edith Lucas is mad 'cause I said I'd go home with *her*," vouchsafes Lucy.

"Pooh! We don't mind, do we?" you affirm, employing a delightful plural.

"Uh-uh," agrees Lucy.

Beatific silence thenceforth encompassed your route until the Rogers front gate was reached.

"Good-night!" piped Lucy, scampering for the door.

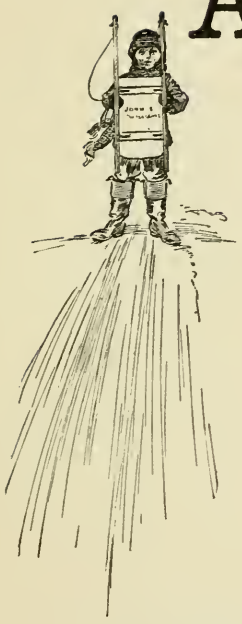
"Good-night!" cried you, running deliriously down the street.

And the next day all the boys in town pestered you with their teasing: "Aw, John! went home with a girl!" and you find "John Walker is Lucy Roger's beau," chalked upon horse-blocks and walks and gate-posts.

MIDDLETON'S HILL

"'WANT TO GO DOWN, ONCE? I'LL TAKE YOU'"

MIDDLETON'S HILL



"'CLEAR THE TRACK'"

ALL night those new and cherished acquisitions, your copper toed boots, had served patient sentry-duty beside your peaceful couch, now wistfully to wonder why their lord and master did not awaken and see what had happened.

The rising-bell summoned you, but you only protested, blind, and snuggled for another snooze.

"Snowing, John! Get up!" called father.

"Scrape, scrape," came to your ears the warning of an early shovel.

Your heart gave a wild hurrah, open popped your eyes, to the floor you floundered, to the window you staggered. Sure enough! The sill was heaped to the lower panes, and in the air the flakes were as thick as swarming bees.

Ecstatically alive, you hustled on your clothes, bestowed on face and hair a cold lick and a hasty promise, and in the copper-toed boots (eager for the fray) raced noisily down the stairs.

You found the household less exhilarated and enthusiastic than you had expected.

"Well, this *is* a snowstorm!" commented mother, in a blank way, pouring the coffee.

"Um-m-m! You bet!" you mumbled.

"It's good for all day, I guess," said father. solemnly, sipping from his cup as he gazed out.

"Oh, dear! Do you think so?" sighed mother, aghast.

"Oh, gee! I hope so!" sighed you, fervently.

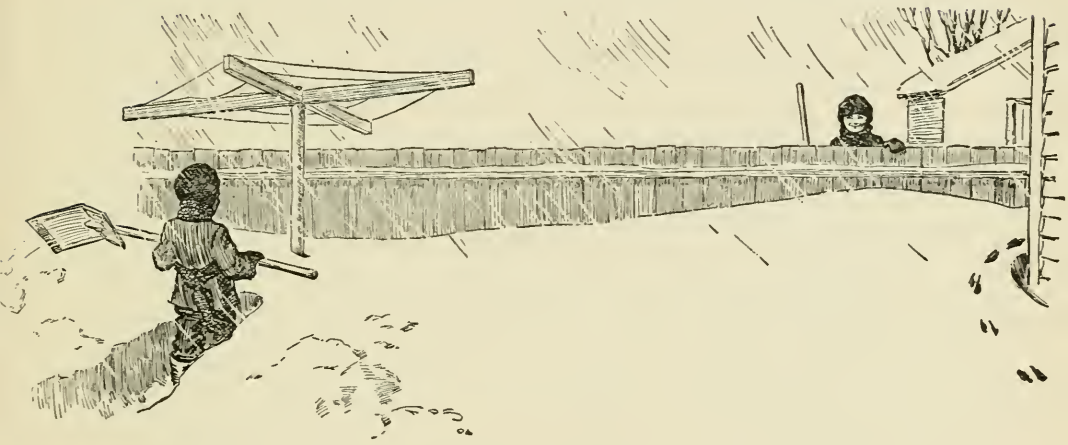
"Shouldn't wonder if we had a foot or more, by night," continued father.

You heard him rapturously. Father knew — but it seemed almost too good!

Fourteen buckwheat cakes were all that you could allow yourself, this morning. The snow needed you; and grabbing cap and scarf and mittens, with a battle-cry of defiance and joy you rushed, by the back door, into the furious vortex. The crackling stove, the cheery carpet, the warm, balmy, comfortable atmosphere of indoors appealed not to you.

First, exultantly you dragged forth for a preliminary canter your faithful sled, long since extricated from summer quarters and held in readiness for action. The snow proved satisfactory.

"Ain't this dandy!" you shouted through the



"'AIN'T THIS DANDY'"

driving flakes, across from chores in your back yard to Hen at chores in his back yard.

"You bet you!" agreed Hen.

So it was, for boys; and Madam Nature, hovering anxiously near, knew that her efforts were appreciated.

"Won't the hill be bully, tho'!" you jubilated.

"Golly!" reflected Hen.

"Got your runners polished yet?" he asked. "Mine's all rust."

"So are mine," you replied.

Down crowded the snow — there never are such snows, nowadays; so jolly, so welcome, so free from disagreeable features — and in school and as you ploughed back and forth and shoveled your paths, you and your comrades were riotously happy.

Down tumbled the snow — great, soft flakes of it like shredded wool-pack — until, when it ceased, as much had fallen as heart of boy could wish for, which was considerable more than would have satisfied the majority of other people.

The hill was covered, and "sliding" was to be "dandy" — and that was your sole thought. Why else had the snow come?

To-day you remember that hill, don't you? Middleton's Hill! Of course you do! The best hill that ever existed. Perfect — for coasting. Ideal — for coasting. Grand — for coasting. Therefore an invaluable possession, although, be it said, of importance rather underestimated by the public generally.

The hill started off gently; suddenly, with a dip, increased its slope; and after a curve, and a splendid bump over a culvert, merged with the level roadway. Difficult enough to ascend in muddy spring, in dusty summer, and even in hard fall, when with the winter it came into its own and was polished by two hundred runners, horse and man usually sought another route. It was practically surrendered to you and yours, as your almost undisputed heritage.

To be sure, occasionally some rebellious citizen attempted to adapt it to his own selfish ends by sprinkling ashes, in a spasmodic fashion, athwart it; but a little snow or water soon nullified the feeble essay. To be sure, occasionally a stubborn driver, his discretion less than his valor, tilted at the glistening, glassy acclivity; and while his horses, zigzagging and slipping, toiled upward, you and yours hailed him as a special gift of Providence and gleefully hitched on behind.

Yes, it was a paragon of a hill, with a record of pleasure to which here and there a broken bone (soon mended) lent but additional zest.

The hill is ready. The track, at first traced

"HAILED HIM AS A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE"

by the accommodating sleds and feet of a pioneer few, gradually has been packed and polished until now it lies smooth, straight-away, inviting.

The hill is ready. So are you. Your round turban-like cap is pulled firmly upon your head and over your ears, your red tippet (mother knit it) twice encircles your neck, crosses your breast, and is tied (by mother) behind in a double knot, your red double mittens (mother knit them and constantly darns them) are on your hands, and your legs and feet are in your stout copper-toed, red-topped boots. And your cheeks (mother kissed them) are red, too.

Twitched by its leading-rope, follows you, like a loyal dog, your sled — a very fine sled, than which none is finer.

"Say, but she's slick, ain't she!" glories Hen, as you and he hurriedly draw in sight of your goal. From all quarters other boys, and girls as well, are converging, with gay chatter, upon this Mecca of winter sport. Far and wide has gone forth the word that Middleton's hill is "bully."

"Ain't she!" you reply enthusiastically.

With swoop and swerve and shrill cheer down

scud the sleds and bobs of the earlier arrivals, and the spectacle spurs you to the crest.

Panting, you reach it.

"You go first," you say, to Hen.

"Naw; you," says he.

"All right. I'd just as lief," you respond.

Breast-high you raise your sled, its rope securely gathered in your hands.

"Clea-ear the track!" you shriek.

"Clea-ear the track!" echoes down the hill, from the mouths of solicitous friends.

You give a little run, and down you slam, sled and all, but you uppermost; a masterly exposition of "belly-bust." Over the crest you dart. The slope is beneath you, and now you are off, willy-nilly.

"Clea-ear the track!" again you shriek, with your last gasp.

You have begun to fall like a rocket, faster, faster, ever faster, through the black-bordered lane. The wind blinds your eyes, the wind stops your breath, the wind sings in your ears, like an oriflamme stream and strain your tippet-ends, and the snow-crystals spin in your wake. Dexterously applying your toes you steer more by intuition than by sight. You dash around

the curve; you strike the culvert, and it flings you into the air until daylight shows 'twixt you and your steed; ka-thump! you have landed again; and presently over the level you glide with slowly decreasing speed until, the last glossy inch covered, the uttermost mark possible, this time, attained, you arise, with eyes watery and face tingly, and stand aside to watch Hen, who comes apace in your rear.

"Aw, that ain't fair! You're shovin'! That don't count!" you assert, as Hen, in order to equal your mark, evinces an inclination to propel with his hands, alligator fashion.

Hen sheepishly desists, and scrambles to his feet.

"Cracky! That's a reg'ler old belly-bumper, ain't it!" he exclaims joyously.

He refers to the delicious culvert. You assent. The culvert is a consummation of bliss to which words even more expressive than Hen's may not do justice.

Up the slope, in the procession along its edge, you and he trudge; and down again, in the procession along its middle, you fly. Over and over and over you do it, and the snow fills sleeve and neck and boot-leg.

Occasionally, with much noise but little real speed, adown the track comes a girl, or two girls. The majority of them, however, use a track of their own — a shorter, slower track, off at one side. Poor things, condemned by fate to their own company and that of the smallest, timidest urchins, they pretend to have exciting times.

They sit up straight, girls do, the ethics of society seeming to deny them the privilege of "belly-buster," and on high sleds — nothing can be more ignominious than a "girl's sled" — scraping and screaming, showing glimpses of red flannel petticoats as they prod with their heels, acting much like frightened hens scuttling through a yard they plough to their goal.

For a girl to essay the big hill appears to be "no end of" an undertaking. First she — or, probably they, inasmuch as girls usually adventure in pairs, to encourage each other; first they, then, squat on their flimsy sled, girl-fashion (another reproach this: "girl fashion"), and titter and shriek; and the one on behind urges by "hitching" with her feet in the peculiar girl way, and the one on before holds back with her feet and says:

"Wait!"

They wait for bob and sled to precede, until with frantic unanimity of action they seize upon

"GIRL FASHION"

a favorable interim betwixt coasters, and with trepidation are off.

But you overtake them.

"Look out!" you yell, as on your bounding courser you eat up the trail.

"Look out!"

You try to retard your speed by dragging your copper toes. Anticipating the shock of collision you lift the forward part of you, like a worm reconnoitering.

"Look ou-out!"

One last agonizing appeal. And now the pesky girls, glancing behind with sudden apprehension, in utmost haste and terror-stricken confusion, amidst wild cries, by dint of laboring feet veer ditchward, stop on the brink, and as you shoot past rise flustrated and gaze after.

Well, they have spoiled your slide. You had a grand start, and goodness knows where you might have gone to. Darn it, why can't girls stay on their own track!

Yes, indeed. Nevertheless, budding chivalry grafted upon natural superiority prompts you to take Somebody down on a real ride. You would like this Somebody, if the other boys would only let you; but most of the time you cannot afford to.

A sparkling little figure in white hood, fur-trimmed jacket, white mittens strung about her

neck, and plaid skirt well wadded out over long leggins, with her ridiculously high sled (girl-sled) she stands by looking on.

"Want to go down, once? I'll take you," you offer bluffly.

From amidst the giggling society of her sex she bravely advances, and obediently seats herself on your sled.

"Oh, Lucy! I'd be 'shamed! Sliding with a boy! Oh, Lucy!"

Lucy wriggles disdainfully.

"Don't you wish *you* could!" she retorts.

"Aw, John! Takin' a girl! 'Fore I'd be seen takin' a girl!" joins in the gibing chorus of your mates

You hurriedly shove off.

"You got room enough?" asks your solicitous passenger.

"Lots," you affirm huskily; and crouched to steer you leave the derisive crest behind you.

Down you spin — you and Lucy, both gripping hard the sled; your shoulder pressing against her soft back, and her hair-ribbon whipping across your mouth as you peer vigilantly ahead.

Here is the culvert.

"Hold on tight!" you warn.

"Whisk — slam!"

With a tiny scream from Lucy you have landed, right side up, the three of you.

"Wasn't that bully?" you query reassuringly.

But Lucy must first recover her breath.

This she does when finally, the sled having entirely ceased motion, you and she must fain disembark.

"My!" she gasps. "I jus' love to go fast like that, don't you?"

Her tone conveys volumes. Suffused with proud gratification you pick up the rope.

"You're a splendid steerer, aren't you!" she says admiringly.

"Huh!" you scoff. "Steerin' 's easy."

"Get on and I'll haul you up," you proffer.

"Won't I be too heavy?" she objects, delighted.

"Naw," you assert. "You're nothin'."

Ignoring jeers and flings you carry out your voluntary program, to the very end.

"Thank you ever so much," pipes Lucy, nimbly running to rejoin her own kind.

Shamefacedly you lift your sled, and with a tremendous belly-buster are away again; and

when once more you reach the crest your straggle from grace will have been forgotten.

And at last, wet through and through, countenance like a polished Spitzenburgh (you have a right to the simile, as the barrel in the cellar will testify), hands and feet like parboiled lobsters, reluctant to withdraw but monstrously hungry, you arrive at home to be fed.

"*John!* Don't come in here that way! Go right into the kitchen and take off your boots. Mercy!" expostulates mother, as in you stamp, leaving a slushy trail and munching a doughnut as a sop to that clamorous stomach.

Wearily you return to the kitchen, and apply your oozy, slippery boots to the bootjack. Then, having abandoned your footgear, their once gay tops now a sodden maroon and their copper toes already showing effects of the friction whereby they steered you down the hill, to steam behind the kitchen stove, you obey orders to go upstairs and change into the dry clothing that mother has thoughtfully laid out.

What a nuisance mothers are! Oh, dear, won't supper *ever* be ready!

"Billy Lunt an' Chub Thornbury's got a bob. Let's us make one," proposed Hen.

"Let's," you agreed.

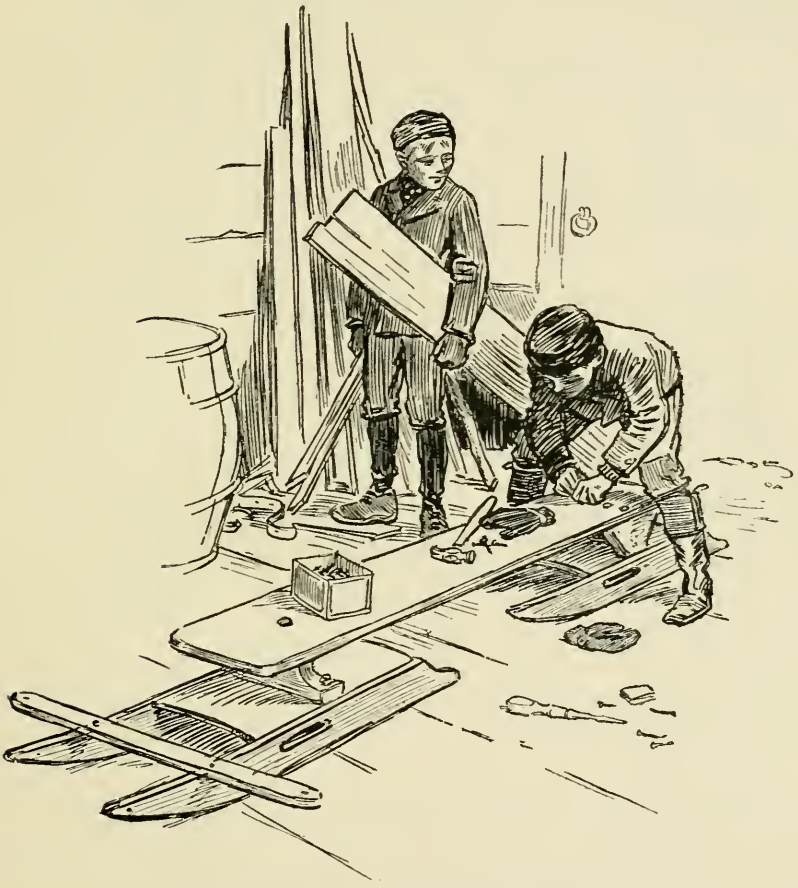
So, combining equipments, you and he proceeded, in emulation. The two sleds were connected by a board seven feet long, bolted as securely as possible to the rear sled, and fastened to the front one by a single bolt which acted as a pivot — and which, at a sudden jerk, would pull out, and throw the major portion of the bob upon its own resources.

However, the bob was a very good bob, and when cleverly shoved off and expertly steered gallantly maintained itself against all comers; even against Fat Day's more aristocratic "boughten" bob, which, with its gay paint and varnish and rail "hand-holts," was the pride of Fat's heart and the apple of his stingy eye.

Hen steers (for steering is a science) and you shove off (for shoving off is an art). Between you two, pilot and captain of the craft, it packed, on occasion, an inconceivable number of passengers, with always room for one more.

"Gimme a ride. Lem*me* ride!" beseech friends.

"Aw, you can't! There ain't any room!"
"There is, too! I can get on, all right."



"THE BOB WAS A VERY GOOD BOB"

"G'wan! Don't you let him, John! Don't you let him, Hen! We're all squashed now!"
This from the jealous load already booked.

"Shove up, can't you! Aw, shove up! What's the matter with you! There's lots of room!"

And the pestiferous intruder squeezes in. The bob looks like a gigantic caterpillar upside down, so thick are the heads and shoulders in a series of ridges. The board creaks. The load also complains, grunting uneasily as each boy, fitting like a bootjack into the boy before, his legs stretched horizontally along either flank, tries to "shove up closer." Hen, his feet braced against the stick nailed across the points of the guiding sled, is the only unit of the mass that enjoys any elbow-space. But then, the pilot of a vessel is *ex officio* the favored personage.

"Darn it, lift up your feet, there!"

"Then somebody hold 'em! Grab my feet, somebody!"

"Whose feet *I* got, anyway?"

"Aw, quit your shovin' so!"

"G'wan an' push off. We don't want any more."

"Gimme some room!" you plead. "I only got about an inch!"

They hitch along, and cede you another inch.

"Clea-ear the track!"

You bend and push. The bob starts. It gathers way. One concluding effort, and you land aboard just as it is outstripping you; and kneeling upon your scant two inches, hanging for dear life to the shoulders of the boy in front of you, are embarked for your rapturous yet excruciating flight.

With lurch and leap, with whoop and cheer, down zips the bob, every lad clutching his neighbor as he may, each cemented to each — but you, out in the cold, clutching most desperately of all.

"I'm fallin' off!" you announce wildly.

The two inches are only one and a half.

"Jocko's fallin' off!"

How delightful — for the others! The news of your lingering predicament is received with hoots of wicked glee.

Around the curve, with everybody leaning, and the rear sled slewing outward whilst you balance on its extreme edge. Going —

Over the culvert, a double jounce, and now you are all but gone. Going, going —

On the level, nearing the finish, speed slightly abated; and now your tired fingers relax, you

cannot hang on any longer, your knees slip, going, going — *gone;* but gone more gracefully than you had reason to expect.

"You didn't gimme any room!" you accuse, angrily, when you meet your squad as in rollick-

ing mood they tow the bob back toward the crest.

The old hill is not what it used to be. It has been "graded." No more do the sleds flash adown as they once did. A new-fangled set of

city ordinances forbids. Hazardous curve and inspiring "belly-bumper," tippet and copper-toed boots, clipper and bob, have vanished together, leaving only a few demure little boys in overcoats, and demure little girls in muffs and boas, who sit up straight and properly descend, at a proper pace, along the outskirts — and think that they are having fun!

Good-by, old hill.

GOIN' SWIMMIN'

GOIN' SWIMMIN'

THE sun was laying a fervid course higher and higher athwart the bending blue; in household kitchens was the odor of sassafras tea — and in your mouth the taste of it; the air was humid, the earth was mellow, winter flannels a sticky burden, shoes burning shackles; snakes had long been out, and turtles were emerging, to bask, and to pop in, as of old, with exasperating freedom; you yearned to follow them.

The water *looked* warm. Snoopie Mitchell, always authority on everything, bluffly asserted that it *was* warm. But Snoopie appeared to have a hide impervious to discomfort. Snoopie did as he pleased, and nothing ever hurt him, notwithstanding. Sometimes you wished that your father and mother would observe, and learn, to your profit.

"Dare you to go in swimmin'!" volunteered Billy Lunt, that hot spring noon, when it seemed to you that you must burst out of your smothering clothes as a snake out of his skin.

"Aw, we ain't afraid; are we, Hen?" you answered promptly, enrolling Hen for support.

"No. We'll go if you will," retorted Hen.

"Snoop Mitchell — he's been in an' he says it's dandy," informed Billy.

Of course! That Snoopie! He was well named.

"Aw — I bet he ain't, just the sam-ee," you faltered enviously.

"He has, too. You ask him, now."

And Snoopie at the moment opportunely sauntering near, Billy hailed him:

"Snoopie! Ain't you been in swimmin' already?"

Snoopie grandly nodded, and nonchalantly spat betwixt two front upper teeth.

"Course I have," he answered. "Ain't you kids been in yet? Aw, gee!"

"Was it warm?" you inquired humbly.

"Jus' right. Makes you feel fine. We go in every day, about — me an' Spunk Carey."

That settled it. The swimming season had opened.

During the afternoon at school you and Hen and Billy were in an ecstatic tremor. From behind his geography Billy darted into sight

two fingers, you responded, daringly, with two fingers, and Hen telegraphed quick accord with like two fingers — the mysterious "V" sign of the Free Masonry of swimmers.

Teacher saw, and frowned; but "teacher," by reason of her limitations of sex, could not appreciate what you were having, and what she was missing.

With a proud consciousness, you and Hen and Billy foregathered after school and started creekward.

"We're goin' swimmin'!" you called back to former associates.

"Aw, it's too cold!" they complained.

"We don't care. 'Twont' hurt us."

"Bet you don't go in!"

"Bet you a hundred dollars we do!"

"Bet you two hundred you don't!"

(Dollars meant so much less to you in those days than in these.)

"You come along and see!"

"Uh-uh. We're goin' to play ball."

Very well; let them stay and play ball, if they liked. You would be entitled to strut on the morrow.

In the afternoon sun the creek lay smiling,

inviting, deluding. Upon its bank a new crop of tin cans testified that the fishing season, also, had opened. Some of the cans were yours. The grass was soft, and sitting on it you vied with Hen and Billy in pulling off shoes and stockings.

"First in!" challenged Billy, hastily peeling.

You fumbled with the buttons which united waist with knickerbockers, and silently resolved that you would let him beat. Evidently Hen was of mind identical. Billy, now naked like some young faun, but singularly white and spindly, gave a coltish little kick and prance, and, with ostentatious gusto, advanced to the water's edge.

Yourself exposed to the world, feeling oddly bare and defenseless — a feeling which with wont would disappear, as the summer wore on —-you stood and, shivering, wrapped yourself in your arms and watched him.

Billy stuck a toe into the water and quickly drew it back.

"Is it cold?" you queried.

"Naw! Come on!" he urged.

"Let's see you go in first."

"That ain't fair. You come in, too!"

"Naw! You dared us. You got to do it first," declared Hen.

"Huh, I ain't afraid," asserted Billy.

Resolutely he put one foot in. Involuntarily he flinched — but he followed it with the other. Witnessing his actions, reading that his toes were curling, you and Hen jeered and whooped. As you jeered, you continued to huddle, and to shrink within yourself. Gee, but it was cold! Somehow, the sun did not warm, and a little breeze, heretofore unnoted, enveloped you with an icy breath. You humped your shoulders, and your teeth chattered. Hen's teeth, also, were chattering. You could hear them.

"Go on! Duck over!" you told Billy, derisively.

Billy was game. Suddenly, with water up to his quaking knees, he ducked. In an instant he was upright again — staggering, gasping, sputtering, but triumphant.

"Come on in!" he implored, wildly solicitous that you and Hen, hooting your glee, should participate more actively. "'Tain't cold. What's the matter with you?"

Followed by Hen you diffidently moved forward. Shivering, gingerly you teetered down,

twigs and little stones hurting your yet tender soles.

Billy ducked again, apparently with the utmost relish, and floundered and splashed, his energy very marked.

You experimented with a foot — and hastily jerked it out.

"Gee!" you exclaimed. "I ain't goin' in! It's too cold."

"I ain't, neither," decreed Hen.

"Aw, 'tain't cold a bit when you've wet over," assured Billy eagerly — but suspiciously blue. "Take a dare — aw, I wouldn't take a dare! You're stumped! Yah-ah! I've stumped you!"

Diabolically did Billy flounder and gibe. He paused, expectantly, for you planted a foot, and gasped, and followed with the other; so did Hen.

Billy playfully splashed you.

"Come on!" he cried. "Come on!"

"Ouch! Quit that, will you?" you snarled, as the poignant drops stung your thin skin. "I'm comin', ain't I?"

Deeper, a little deeper, you went, with your piteously pleading flesh trying to recede from that repellant glacial line creeping up, inch by inch.

Billy shrieked with joy. What is misery when it has company!

"Duck!" he cackled. "Duck! 'Twon't be cold after you've ducked."

Must you? Oh, must you? Yes. You drew a long breath, shut your eyes, and desperately butted under. So, you dimly were conscious, did Hen.

Ugh! You choked; your stomach clove flat against your backbone, and in you was not space for air. Blindly you recovered, and lurched and clawed and fought for breath, while Billy rioted with wicked exultation.

"'Tain't c-c-cold, is it?" you gasped defiantly.

"No; 'tain't c-c-cold a bit," chattered Hen.

"I told you 'twasn't cold," sniggered Billy.

But you impetuously plashed for shore; so did Hen; so did Billy. With numbed fingers you made all haste to pull your clothes over the goose-flesh of your weazened limbs and your shuddering little body. You began to grow warmer. You tried to control rattling teeth.

"'Twasn't cold!"

"Of course it wasn't!"

"We'll tell all the kids it's bully."

"Gee! I feel fine, don't you?"

"You bet!"

"Let's come again."

"Let's come to-morrow."

"N-no, I can't come to-morrow," you declared.

"I can't, either," said Hen.

Retrospect was most delightful; but prospect — well, here was a case where the prospect did *not* please. Anyhow, you had not been stumped. Your honor was intact — and you could rest on your laurels. You could nicely combine discretion with valor; so why not?

"I've been in swimmin'," you ventured, with becoming modesty, at the supper-table that evening.

"John! When?" reproved mother, aghast.

"To-day, after school."

You endeavored to speak with the carelessness befitting a seasoned nature such as yours — but you awaited with some inward trepidation family developments.

"Why!" ejaculated mother.

You felt that she was gazing across at father. Much depended, you realized, upon father. However, he had been a boy, and he surely would understand.

"But wasn't the water too cold?" she questioned anxiously.

"Uh-uh," you signified, steadily eating.

"It *must* have been cold," insisted mother. "Why, the sun hasn't had time to warm it yet. I should think you'd have frozen to *death!*"

"It was dandy. Makes you feel fine," you assured boldly. "Billy Lunt dared Hen and me, and —"

"I suppose if some other boy dared you to jump off the top of the church steeple you'd do it, then," stated mother severely.

"He'd have to do it first," you explained with a giggle.

"Well, I *should* think you'd have frozen," murmured mother, with an appealing glance at father.

Perhaps *she* would have frozen — being, like "teacher," of a sex unfortunate. But not you — nay, not mighty, dauntless, much-experienced you, with your ten long years backing you up. Huh!

Not always was swimming thus a task; the embrace of the creek deceitful and inhospitable.

Ah, those glorious, piping, broiling summer

days, when from the faded sky the heat streamed down, and from the simmering earth the heat streamed up; when abroad, in the maples and the elms and the apple-trees incessantly scraped with ghoulish glee the locusts, and in the fields the quail cried perseveringly, "Wet! More wet! More wet!" when the sun ruled absolutely, and everybody — save you and your fellows — stewed and panted under his sway; "dog-days" — aye, and boy-days! Then, then, at the swimming-hole the kingdom of boyhood held high carnival.

All nature lay lax and heaving, seeking shade and avoiding exertion, as outward bound through the stifling afternoon you and Hen hastened for the swimming-hole. Even the birds were subdued, and the drone of the bumble-bee was languid, protesting; but what did you and Hen care about such things as temperature or humidity? Goodness! You were "goin' swimmin'!"

As you pattered on, you and he, the boards of the sidewalk scorched your bare soles, toughened as they were, and even the baked earth of the pathway along the vacant lots tortured, so that, with "ouches" and "gees" you hopped

for shaded spots or sought the turf. Beat down upon your flapping straws the strenuous sun — his beams, after all, not unfriendly, but merely testing, and in a hearty way, welcoming.

He recognized you two as akin to the meadow-larks and the gophers, and he knew that he might not harm you. You were immunes.

The outskirts of the village are reached right speedily; and now off at a tangent, athwart the drowsy, palpitating pasture where the bees are busy amidst the clover, making for a fringe of trees leads a path worn by many a hurrying, bare, and buoyant sole.

You can hear, ahead of you, an enthusing medley of gay shrieks and cries and laughter.

"Crickety!" you say to Hen, quickening the pace. "There's a whole lot in already!"

And you are not even undressed!

On before, between the tree-trunks at your destination, you can glimpse, strewn over the sod or hanging from low branches, rejected and dejected garments — limp shirts, hickory, checked, tinted; stumpy trousers, dangling or down-flung. You descry the patchy blue of Snoopie Mitchell's one-suspendered overalls; so you know that Snoopie is there. You know

who else is there, too. The apparel is evidence.

The sight redoubles your efforts. In rivalry with Hen, panting, perspiring, eager, you penetrate the trees and stop short on the bank. You have arrived.

Yes, here they are: Snoopie, and Billy Lunt, and Fat Day (his body covered with hives), and Skinny, and Chub, and Nixie Kemp (who can exhibit the biggest vaccination mark of all of you), and Tom Kemp (who is always peeling, somewhere), and — oh, a glorious company, wallowing like albino porpoises, threshing like whales!

"A-a-a-ah, lookee, lookee!" greets Snoopie (indefatigable, omnipresent) shrilly, grinning up at you; and for your benefit he stands on his head and waves his brown legs above the surface.

"Hello, Fat!"

"Hello, Skinny!"

"Hello, Jocko!"

"Hello, Hen!"

"Hello, Nix!"

"Come on in! Come on in!"

"Gee! It's dandy!"

"Water's jus' fine! Warm as milk!"

"You're missin' it! We been in all day."

Harrowing announcement!

Nor you nor Hen needs invitation by word of mouth. You are ripping feverishly at your obstinate buttons, and tugging feverishly at your pestering clinging garments. But how absurdly simple was your attire, as reviewed to-day from your environment of starch and balbriggan, hosiery and collar. Nevertheless, many a time, in your agony of haste, you envied Snoopie, who with a single movement slipped the one suspender of his overalls and ducked out of his voluminous shirt, and with a whoop was in! — happy Snoopie!

Now, investing apparel cast aside in an ignominious heap, at last free and untrammeled you stride forward. From knee down and from neck up you are dark-brown; between, you are whitish-brown. Before the season closes you will be an even brown all over (like Snoopie), if your ambition is realized.

First you must wet your head. This is the law; else you may get cramps. You hurriedly wet it.

"Look out!" you warn with a significant step or two backward, to gain momentum.

You give a little run, and with a rapturous shout and a grand splash *you* are in. So is Hen.

Oh, bliss! The caressing, rollicking flood envelops you to the shoulders. You wade, you kick, you sputter, you blow, you plunge your length, you squeal your joy intense — you convince yourself and would convince others that you swim; and your comrades wade, and kick, and sputter, and blow, and plunge their lengths, and squeal — and ostentatiously paddle. While Snoopie, crawling about under water, grabs legs; presently grabbing yours, and down you go, beneath, to emerge strangling, clutching, incensed.

Stirred from the very bottom, all the pool is beaten to foam, the sun looks down between the spangling leaves and smiles, and the trees fondly overhang, stretching down friendly boughs.

What a wonder you were, as a water performer!

"See me float!" you yell — this being the popular pitch of conversation.

And you *could* float — almost, that is, until

your feet or your face sank too far and forced you to rally.

"Aw, that ain't floatin'! Jus' watch me!" decrees Snoopie.

Snoopie really could float — and challenging admiring eyes he proceeds to display.

"Watch *me!*" implores Fat.

"Aw, gee! Watch Fat! Aw gee! That ain't floatin'! That ain't floatin', is it, Snoop? Fat wiggles his hands down by his sides!"

"Don't either!" declares Fat, angrily, flopping his mottled self to a standing position.

"You do, too! Don't he?"

You could stand Snoopie's superiority, but not Fat's.

"Well, I didn't wiggle 'em much, anyhow," grumbles Fat.

With breath tight held and head tilted stanchly back, launching yourself and paddling furiously dog-fashion, you can easily imagine that you are cleaving a path through the murky flood.

"You're touchin' bottom! Aw, you touched bottom!" accuses Fat.

"I wasn't, either, darn you! I started 'way

up there at that stick and I come 'way down here!" (The distance is at least a yard.)

Betimes, splashing out, you all seek the banks, amphibious-like; to streak yourselves fantastically with mud, to cover yourselves luxuriously with hot sand, to race, to gambol, or to loll on the turf and emulously compare sunburn, "peels," and vaccination scars.

In again you scamper, and the pool resumes its cauldron turmoil.

The sun, from his new station low in the west, sends rays slanting in beneath the trees to signal "Home."

"Come on, I'm goin' out!" says Hen. "You'd better, too. Your lips are blue as the dickens."

"So are yours," you retort. "Ain't they, kids! Ain't Hen's lips bluer'n mine?"

A farewell wallow, and out you wade reluctantly. One by one out wade all. Your hands are shriveled with long soaking. You are water-logged. There is sand in your hair. Languidly you dress.

With Snoopie and Hen and Fat and Skinny and the others — a company now chastened and subdued — back you stroll across the pasture, the setting sun in your face, the robins

piping their even-song, the locusts done and quiescent, katydids tentatively tuning up as their successors. The sky is golden in the west, pink overhead, blue in the east. Upon the clover the dew is collecting, annoying o'erzealous bees. Skinny and Nix drop off to the left, Snoopie to the right, each lining his straightest course for home.

"Good-night, kids!" they call back.

Now in the village, the little group rapidly dwindles. Presently only you and Hen and Billy remain.

Billy turns in.

At his gate Hen stops.

The next gate is yours. You are glad. You are tired — so tired — so very limp and tired — and so hungry!

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL PICNIC

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL PICNIC

'TWAS the day of the picnic — the Baptist picnic. You yourself were not, by family persuasion, a member of that denomination, but the Schmidts, next door, were, and by the grace of Hen, your crony, you were enabled to gain admittance, upon occasion, into the Baptist 'bus.

The 'bus was not scandalized. You had been in it before, as Methodist, Congregationalist, Unitarian — what not. So had Hen. Only a few little girls were shocked, and gazed at you disdainfully.

"*You* ain't a Baptist!" they accused.

"Neither's Blanche Davis!" you retorted, carrying the debate into the enemy's country. "I guess I've got as much right here as she has!"

"I came with Lucy Barrett," informed Blanche, primly.

"An' I come with Hen Schmidt. His father's a deacon, too!" you asserted.

"Oh, he ain't — is he, Mr. Jones? He ain't — is he?" appealed the little girls, shrilly.

Mr. Jones, beaming with long-suffering, Sunday-school-superintendent good humor, obligingly halted.

"Henry Schmidt's father ain't a deacon, is he?"

"Yes, I believe so," affirmed Mr. Jones, pleasantly.

Thus you valiantly maintained your position — and Hen's.

When you and Hen had pantingly arrived at the rendezvous you had found yourselves in the midst of baskets and bustle. The baskets gave forth fascinating, mysterious clinks. In your individual capacity of guest you had brought no basket of your own, but you had helped Hen carry down the Schmidt contribution, and you knew of what it spake and smelled, and you had peeked in under the cover. Besides, Hen had told you, in detail.

Clad in necessarily stout shoes, but quite superfluously clean waists, you and he, with the basket between, had hastened to the place of assembly.

Other boys appeared. Poor indeed was that

wight who could not rake up a Baptist friend — particularly if his own church gave picnics. Therefore, behold, as at the millennium, the creeds of your world united to-day under one flag — which happened to be the Baptist.

Snoopie Mitchell, of course, was there. Snoopie usually went fishing or skating on Sunday; but at picnic-time and Christmas even he did not deny the comforts of the church.

"Hello!" you said.

"Hello!" said Snoopie nonchalantly. "Aw, you kids are too late!"

Snoopie never was too late. He had the instincts of the ranging shark, and, moreover, perfect freedom to obey them.

"Why?" demanded you and Hen breathlessly.

"They took it away. Gee! Two freezers bigger'n me!"

"More'n the Methodists had?" you inquired eagerly.

"You bet!" affirmed Snoopie.

You sighed — a happy, satisfied sigh.

The passenger 'buses arrived, two of them. They were greeted with a cheer, and scarcely had the gaunt, rusty, white horses of the fore-

most one swung about to back ere into it you all scrambled.

You and Hen promptly plumped down at the end — end seats and the seat with the driver being the choice ones.

"Children! Children! Be careful!" appealed the superintendent, mechanically. Poor man, already he had done a hard day's work!

As well might he have cautioned a river running down-hill. Jostled past you girls and boys, elbows in ribs, shoulder thrusting shoulder, in a competition that recognized no sex. Like lightning the hack is occupied to overflowing; packed with two lines, facing each other, of flushed, excited children, with here and there a flustered matron; you and Hen, as stated, holding the end seats, Billy Lunt (he wasn't a Baptist, either) up with the driver, but Snoopie, crafty, ragged Snoopie, hanging on at the steps!

The 'bus rolls off. You all shout back derisively at your outstripped associates.

Father had darkly hinted that you should take an umbrella and rubber boots, and spoken of "total immersion," whatever that might be; but, lo, the sky is cloudless, the morn is of sparkling summer, the air is fresh, everything

is lovely, the town is behind and the picnic before, and you don't care, any more than you know, what he meant! You are in the 'bus; and the only person you envy is Snoopie, perilously clinging to its rear.

With the horses at a trot he springs on and off, drags his feet or sprints behind, and is continually saying "Lookee!" while he performs some new, adroit, impish deed. The women gasp and exclaim "Oh!" "I wish he wouldn't!" and "Mrs. Miller, can't *you* stop him!" Then somebody's hat blows off and creates a diversion.

Half a block in your wake is the other 'bus, and occasionally jogs apace a carriage, with suggestive rattle of dishes and bulge of hamper.

Your vehicle rumbles over a creek bridge and slowly rounds a curve.

"I see it! I see it!" announces Billy, wriggling on his elevation.

You all stretch necks to "see it," too. Yes, there, just before, in the woods to the right, are the forms of the earlier invaders — the good men and women constituting the volunteer band of provision-arrangers.

The 'bus turns to the roadside. Issues from the driver a long and relieved "Whoa-oa!"

But, even as he says it, you and the other boys are out, over the sides. Under the fence you scoot, to race, madly whooping, up the wooded slope, fearful lest you are missing something. After you scamper, more timidly, the little girls, and last of all, ungallantly consigned to bring the picnic odds and ends, toil your elders.

The 'bus rolls back to town, carrying a man or so delegated to get inevitably forgotten articles.

Now all the wood is riotous with scream and shout. It is a wood filled with possibilities. Early somebody discovers a garter-snake, and at the rallying-cry destruction violently descends upon the harmless thing. Immediately, dangling from the end of a stick, it spreads confusion wherever feminine humanity may be encountered. At its approach the little girls squeal and run, the larger girls shriek and expostulate, and the various mothers shrink and glare indignantly. The superintendent it is who boldly interferes, takes the limp reptile, and throws it away.

"There!" sigh glad onlookers.

But Snoopie marks its fall, and presently recovers it; thereafter to carry it around in his

pocket, intent upon sticking it down unsuspecting comrades' backs.

In the ravine is the shallow creek. As a means of entertainment the creek is about as good as the dead snake. 'Tis jump it and rejump it; 'tis wade it with shoes on and 'tis wade it with shoes off; and 'tis splash far and wide, to see which boy shall get the wetter.

Milder spirits may elect to search for "pretty flowers," or "help mamma," or play "Pussy Wants a Corner," and "Ring Around a Rosie," where solicitous eyes might fondly oversee; where busily labor and perspire the superintendent and assistants, hanging swings and hammocks, lifting, opening, and unpacking; where benignly moves the minister, diffusing unspoken blessings. But you and yours must have more strenuous recreation. So already, when word is transmitted that "they're makin' the lemonade," your knickerbockers are torn from shinning up trees, your waist is limp from romping through the creek, and your face is red, and scratched, and streaming, and dirty.

You are having fun.

Lemonade! Two tubs of it, in the middle of each a lump of ice, about the ice floating

disks of lemon, and a thirsty crowd encircling all.

"Be careful, children. Let the little girls drink first, boys. My, my! That's not the way!" cautioned Mr. Jones, as, the supply of tin cups proving insufficient, some of you evinced a disposition to "get in all over."

The little girls politely tripped off, wiping their mouths with their best handkerchiefs. You and Hen *et al.* lingered. Eventually the tubs were left unguarded. The moment seemed propitious for new diversion.

"Let's see who can drink the most!" proposed Hen.

The idea was brilliant. To hear was to act.

It was plunge in your cup and gulp; and plunge it in and gulp; and fail not to throw the residue in your neighbor's face. Fast and furious waxed the play, with Snoopie appearing to be sure winner.

"Aw, you ain't drinkin' it all! That ain't fair!" you accused, and the other boys joined in.

"Shut up! I am, too!" replied Snoopie, angrily; and proceeded with his count: "Fourteen."

Distanced, his competitors paused, and jealously, but half admiringly, watched.

"Bo-oys! Bo-oys!"

The gentle soprano voice with the reproachful, shocked inflection made you drop tin cups, the batch of you, and hastily look.

'Twas the minister's wife. In power she stood above the superintendent, even, and only slightly below the minister himself.

"Why, why! You mustn't do that!" she objected, bearing down.

Mustn't you? Well, all right; there was lots else to do, and, soaked without and within, reeking of lemonade, you withdrew to do it.

"Gee — I drunk fifteen!" boasted Snoopie, patting his stomach.

He proved to be high man. Yourself had to your score only the modest aggregate of ten.

Behind, at the scene of the late contest, arose sounds of lamentation and dismay over the state of the tubs.

Stately, mute, impenetrable, with baffling rag-carpet covering their tops, in the shade stand the two ice-cream freezers, and on all sides of them the feet of you and your cronies, and of the little girls as well, have well-nigh worn bare

the woodland sod. But now, torn away by less exalted emotions, you and Hen revolve around Mrs. Schmidt's tablecloth spread on the ground and weighted down with dishes.

Here is to be your station at dinner. Other cloths there are, spread about, but Hen recommends his mother's. There will be a family feeling, and less chance of neglect.

Drag slower and slower the minutes. Hen goes foraging, and returns gleefully with a cooky apiece. The delicious smell of sliced tongue and ham and boiling coffee permeates the air.

"Henry, if you and John don't keep out from under foot, I'll take you right straight home!" threatens Mrs. Schmidt, exasperated.

Other women, too, lower at you.

"Yes, boys," chimes in the superintendent; "run away and play, and don't bother the people getting dinner. When we're ready we'll call you."

But, oh, dear, supposing something should be all eaten up before you got there!

At last, at the very last — as the French emphatically express it, *à la fin des fins* — your rebuffs are over. You are actually bidden to advance. 'Tis barely the wink of an eyelash,

but 'tis enough; and before a word is spoken you are there, the two of you, sitting elbow to elbow, on your calves, against the cloth: greedy-eyed, watery-mouthed, faint-stomached.

From right and left come trooping young and old, none of them, save one or two couples from the Bible-class, trooping from very far. They settle like pigeons fluttering down to corn. About each cloth a circle is formed. Nobody is homeless. And isn't it time to start in? Alas! not yet.

From his place ("Mr. Jones, *do* sit down! You look tired to death. Sit right here!" has been the imploration, and he has yielded) the superintendent bobs up and loudly claps his hands, and says: "Sh!"

"Sh!" assist sundry whispers, as warning to you and your mates.

It is the blessing, for, as Mr. Jones subsides, the minister rises.

He prays long and fervently. Out of the corners of your eyes you continue to scan sandwich, and cake, and jelly, and pickles, while your nose wriggles like the nose of an inquiring rabbit. You wonder why the minister cannot quit; but, ignoring every good stopping-point,

he proceeds on and on. You hear Hen groan with pent-up disgust. You slyly groan back.

"Amen."

It has come! Mrs. Schmidt's glance flashes rebuke in your direction, but neither you nor Hen cares. High swells an instant chorus of talk and rattling staccato of dishes. Hither and thither flit busy servers; and, behind the backs of the circle, down your way is progressing in solemn state a huge tray of sandwiches.

You watch it eagerly. It brushes your shoulder. You and Hen grab together. They are bun sandwiches, with cold boiled ham between. Your mouth opens against yours, and your teeth meet through it.

"Yum, yum!" you mumble ecstatically to Hen.

"Yum, yum!" agrees Hen.

Come other sandwiches — tongue and beef and potted ham; come cold fried chicken and pressed veal loaf; come jelly — several kinds — and pickles, sweet and sour. Sometimes you hesitate.

"I will if you will," dares Hen; therefore you generally do.

Comes coffee, and more lemonade; comes pie

— apple, lemon, blueberry, custard; comes cake — chocolate, lemon-layer, jelly-layer, plain, frosted, cocoanut, spice, angel-food.

"Um! Um!" revels Hen at intervals.

"Um! Um!" you respond, in perfect sympathy.

Comes ice cream in "heaping" saucers!

Come cookies and sweet crackers, gingerbread, cream-puffs, kisses and oranges.

You both have been obliged to kneel — expanding, as it were, from your sitting posture. And now the feast is done. Vainly you view the débris; you have accomplished marvels, but you can do no more. You sigh, and, sucking an orange, reluctantly you stand. You waddle off, feeling fat and stuffy, to convene with the other boys, and compare notes.

"Aw, you ought to been at *our* table!" claims Billy Lunt. "We had chocolate cake with chocolate an inch thick — didn't we, Buck?"

"Buck" promptly assents.

"So'd we! So'd we!" retorts Hen. "An' we had jelly-cake, an' —"

"So'd we!" inform rivals, bound to uphold the honors of their boards. "An' lemon pie —"

"An' custard, an' —"

"An' pickled peaches —"

"Golly! I'm 'bout busted!" chuckles Billy, complacently.

Standing companionably by, Snoopie harkens and grins, but says little. Only from a bulging pocket he extracts another orange and drills into it. One may be certain that *he*, at least, has missed nothing.

Prudence might dictate a period of quiescence as a tribute to digestion. But the day is short, and a half a bun skimming into your midst — that is, into the midst of the group, not into your own midst, where it would have hard work to find lodgment — arouses you to retaliation. Back and forth and across fly the remnants from the various tablecloths, and applause greets every hit. Snoopie introduces a popular feature by plastering against a tree-trunk a fragment of a custard pie. Forthwith custard and lemon pie are at a premium, these being the kinds that stick. Then, interrupting the pleasant pastime, charge upon your ranks horrified witnesses, suddenly awakening to the crisis.

"Boys! Stop it! Stop it at once! The idea!"

Expostulating, they drive you all, shame-faced but sniggering, from the premises. You

leave the plot looking as though a caisson laden with cartridges of lunch had exploded there!

The principal event of the day being over, your elders relax into a state more or less lethargic. The women sit and crochet and chat. The minister goes to sleep with a handkerchief on his face, and even some of your juniors follow suit — members of the infant class seeking the pillow of their mothers' laps. The Bible-class wanders off in couples. The superintendent, only, is kept active by demands of "Swing me, Mr. Jones; please swing me!" from the little girls.

Naturally the inspiration for you and yours is to follow the Bible-class couples and spy upon them; when they think themselves nicely secluded and comfortably ensconced, to steal upon them; and in the midst of their innocent confidences to hoot upon them (with such delicate insinuations as "Aw, Mr. Johnson 's Miss Saxby's beau!" — or "Say, Miss Lossing, Mr. Pugsley wants to kiss you!") — and then to flee, riotously giggling.

It is four o'clock. Prolonged shouts from the throats of the superintendent and assistants echo through the woods, calling together the

stragglers. The 'buses have arrived. Home-going must be accomplished early, on account of the "little ones."

All right. If the day is done, another day is coming. You rush down, and you and Hen again secure the end seats. The 'bus fills, its load, on the whole, not so sprightly, nor so enthusiastic, nor so clean as in the morning.

Snoopie hangs on at the rear.

The driver says "Gid-dap!" Somebody replies with "Whoa!" "Whoa-oa!" supplement a score of voices. To frantic encouragement descends the hill, scurrying as if from Indians or bears, a belated, last Bible-class couple.

"Gid-dap!" once more urges the driver.

The 'bus moves. You yawn. Hen yawns. You are tired and sticky. Hen, also, is tired and sticky.

"Lookee!" bids Snoopie.

He throws away his dead snake; his pockets are empty again.

Yet in the depth of the aftermath you brighten. Your thoughts travel ahead. The Presbyterians are to have *their* picnic next week!

"You goin'?" asks Hen.

"You bet!" you reply confidently.

THE OLD MUZZLE-LOADER

THE OLD MUZZLE-LOADER

THE old muzzle-loader was so much the taller that when you stood opposed to it, only by a series of hitches, a few inches at a time, could you extract the ramrod from the slot. In your aiming exercises you leaned so far backward that you formed almost a half circle. The stock was scarred, the hammer was loose, the barrel was rusted and the sight awry, but it was a fine gun; yes, a fine gun, fit for a boy to worship.

And when, with father coaching you, its barrel firmly supported in the crotch of the apple tree and its butt pressed against your throbbing chest, you shut your eyes and jerked the trigger, as you picked yourself up while invidious spectators gamboled and cheered, with what gusto did you assert that "it didn't hurt a bit," and avowed that you wanted to do it again.

How it happened that here you were, headed for the open country with the old muzzle-loader hoisted athwart your shoulder, probably no one alive remembers, but you — and Hen Schmidt, your aider and abettor as accessory after the fact. Dangling against your right knee was the powder flask, dangling against your left knee was the shot flask, and the two banged and rattled as you walked. In one trousers pocket were wads, in the other caps.

"Lemme carry it?" pleaded Hen.

You refused.

"Naw, sir!" you rebuked. "You don't know how."

"Just to that big tree," persisted Hen.

You relented; and under your watchful eye Hen proudly bore the ennobling piece to the tree adown the dusty roadside. Exactly at the tree you claimed possession again.

To-day, looking back, can you not see yourself, a sturdy little figure trudging valorously onward, with the two flasks swaying and jiggling and the old gun cutting like sin into your uncomplaining flesh, and with heart so buoyed by the glorious present that it refused to think on the dubious future; and Hen, scarcely less

elate, solicitous to relieve you of your burden, keeping pace, step for step?

The birds, flitting over or hopping upon either hand along your route, witnessed and gaily laughed. Well might they laugh, because with impunity. Your death-dealing weapon was not loaded; not yet. But presently you halt and in an angle of the rail fence you load, do the two of you, yourself operating, while Hen, keenly critical, at each movement declaims and suggests.

"Aw, gee! That ain't enough powder!" scoffs Hen. "What you 'fraid of? If it was mine, you bet I'd put in twice as much!"

"I guess I know," you retort. "Guess I've seen my father load more times 'n you ever have! What you want to do, bust it?"

The powder is dumped into the muzzle, the gun being propped slantwise so that you may work conveniently. The invincible grains fall in a tinkling shower through the black cylinder. You stuff in a wad.

"Here —" says Hen. "Lemme do it."

You ram it down, and Hen rams it down. In goes the shot, No. 4, nice and large. You insert the final wad. You ram, and Hen rams.

"Look out!" you warn Hen, who edges so close as to joggle you; and with breathless care you press upon the nipple a cap, the way you have seen your father do, and you lower the protecting hammer over it, also the way you have seen your father do. Assisted by Hen you restore the ramrod to its groove. You straighten up. You are ready. You shoulder arms.

You and Hen climb the fence and scale the hill, upon whose slope begins your favorite patch of timber. Making sport of your backs, along the fence that you have just quitted scampers a chipmunk, but you do not know. Your thoughts are ahead.

The consciousness that your gun is charged imbues you with a strange thrill of importance. You are deadly. Come what may, lion, bear, wildcat, squirrel, rabbit, eagle, owl, partridge, you are prepared, so let them one and all beware.

You and Hen talk in guarded tones, whilst your four eyes rove hither and thither, greedy to sight prey. But under-foot, stealthy though you fancy your advance, rustle the dried leaves, spreading afar the news of your passage; and hushed though you consider your voices, they

penetrate into sharp ears attuned to catch the slightest alien sound. Eyes, sharper than yours, widen and wait.

You would give the world to see a rabbit or a squirrel. You have just as much chance of seeing a rabbit or a squirrel as you have of seeing a hippopotamus. However, it doesn't matter.

Hist! On before something twitters.

"There's a bird!"

"Sh, can't you! I hear him!"

Cautiously you and Hen steal forward, tip-toeing over crackling leaf and twig, your gaze riveted on the distance.

"I see him!" announces Hen, excitedly.

"Where?" you whisper.

"There — in that tree! Now he's runnin' 'round the trunk! He's a woodpecker." (Naturalists might cavil and term him a "warbler," but just the same he acts like a woodpecker!) "Can't you see him?"

Alas, you can't — at least, you don't. Hen cannot abide such stupidity. Besides, the thing is liable to make off.

"Ain't you got any eyes? Gee whizz! Gimme the gun. I can pop him from here."

Give Hen the gun? Well, hardly! You

clutch it the tighter, and strain and peer. Now you glimpse him — a tiny chap in a pepper-and-salt suit, busily engaged in pecking at the bark beneath his toes.

"I see him!" you mutter exultantly.

You stoop; Hen stoops. You glide up, making service of covert afforded by tree and bush, and your flasks catch, and sometimes you step on them. Hen, too, glides, just behind, imitating your every movement.

The hour is portentous, but the dare-devil bird braves it and maintains his post at table. Possibly, deceived by your woodcraft (as you fondly suppose), he is oblivious to the fact that yard by yard two boys are drawing closer and closer. You are breathing hard, and to your rear pants Hen, for the advance has been onerous.

"G'wan and shoot! He'll fly away," urges Hen, hoarsely.

Yes, you are near enough. No. 4 shot at fifteen yards ought to do the business for that chap. You slowly settle upon your knees, behind the tree trunk which is your shelter, and cock your piece. At the click the "woodpecker" for an instant ceases operations, and flirts his tail inquisitively.

"Darn it — you've scared him!" you accuse Hen, who shifts and squirms at your back, in attempts to secure a better view. Hen holds himself in suspense, apparently well-nigh suffocating with the effort. You bring your piece to bear, but it is so long and awkward that you are being worsted in the struggle, when Hen eagerly proposes:

"Lay it on my shoulder!"

You recede a little, and Hen wriggles forward, the transfer being accomplished with mingled fear and haste.

Hen's shoulder is rather low for an ideal rest, but you may not complain. You sink as far as possible, and aim. The muzzle projects beyond the tree trunk, and wavers in space. Beyond the space is your suspicious woodpecker, a creature of the most unexpected and eccentric movements imaginable. He never stays "put." Just as the sight approaches him, he changes position; and just as he approaches the sight, it changes. A conjunction of the two seems hopeless.

"Why don't you shoot? What's the matter with you?" gasps Hen.

You shut both eyes. Boom!

Backward you keel, head down, heels up, and the gun, jumping from Hen's shoulder, rasps along the tree to the ground.

"Did I hit him? Where'd he go?" you cry frantically, staggering to your feet.

Hen is bounding toward the tree whereon the impudent bird had been foraging. You wonder that the tree yet remains, but there it is, to all appearances as hale as ever.

"Did I hit him?" you repeat, seizing the gun and following.

"I dunno. But he flew off kind of funny," reports Hen.

"Find any blood? I bet I wounded him like everything, anyhow!" you assert. The woodpecker must have bled internally, for, search as you two might, no tell-tale splashes of gore could be discovered. There were even no feathers. You scanned the tree, but upon close inspection it still persisted in acknowledging no damage, despite the frightful leaden deluge to which you had subjected it.

"Aw, you missed him! Aw, gee!" suddenly bemoans Hen, overcome by disappointment.

"Didn't neither. He flew just when I shot, and I couldn't stop!" you reply, defensively —

unmindful of the discrepancy evident between your denial and your excuse.

"If you'd let me shoot I'd have got him," declares Hen, unplacated.

You proceed to load. Hen moodily holds aloof from helping you ram, and you regain in some measure your lost caste only when you offer him the privilege of the ammunition flasks. These he dons, and by this little touch of diplomacy you smooth over his ill humor.

Together you and he scout along the crispy ridge, ever on the qui vive for another mark, beast or bird. Crows scold. Ah, if you could but bag a crow! But they always flap off too soon. Bluejays jeer. You would stop that mighty quick if they would give you a chance. But they don't. Even woodpeckers fight shy of that inimical, albeit not unerring, gun.

The gun aforesaid is now growing so heavy that the fact cannot be ignored. You balance it on one portion of your anatomy, and on another; yet the more it weighs and the sharper wax its angles, and you can secure no lasting ease.

"I'll carry it," volunteers Hen, prompt to take advantage of your significant manoeuvers.

"Uh-uh," you decline stanchly. You compromise by suggesting, in a moment, with offhand bluffness: "Say, let's sit down a while. There's nothin' up here to shoot."

"Naw," responds Hen, "I'll tell you — let's shoot woodchucks!"

The idea appeals. After "shooting" woodpeckers, "shooting" woodchucks ought to prove a pleasing diversion.

With the gun as angular as ever, but with your hunting instincts piqued anew, you followed while Hen led to the nearest woodchuck hole: that burrow under the stump on the side of the hill, across from Squire Lucas's pasture; a matchless lair for an old 'chuck such as was the occupant, whence he could sally forth and wallow in the squire's clover to his heart's and stomach's content.

Many a covetous glance had the boys of town and country cast toward this burrow; many a fruitless attack had silly dogs made upon its unresponsive portals; from time to time fresh earth about the entrance popularly indicated that the 'chuck was enlarging and remodeling his apartments, and it was commonly believed that he had tunneled clear through the

hill: laughing to scorn the foes that vainly compassed him about, he lived and fattened, and spoiled as much clover as he could.

With bated breath and gingerly tread, you and Hen sneaked to ambush under cover of the zigzag rail fence that diagonally skirted the foot of the hill, before the woodchuck's dwelling. Ah, how many other boys had lurked there, for hope springs eternal.

You trained your grim weapon upon the region of the hole. You allowed Hen to have a squint adown the trusty, and rusty, barrel.

"Gee! I bet that'll pepper him!" commended Hen; and laying aside his flasks he equipped himself with a rock in each hand, for aiding in the proposed job.

Very peaceful and cozy was it there, against the fence, with Indian Summer (in retrospect, those falls were all Indian Summer) around you, the warm sun shining upon you, and the warm grass and pungent weeds an elastic cushion underneath. It was an agreeable change, to surrender your gun to the fence, and relax.

"Sh!" whispered Hen, angrily, when you sought to straighten a leg.

"I don't believe he's comin' out," you whispered back.

"Yes, he will," averred Hen.

"Maybe he doesn't stay there any more," you hazarded anxiously.

"Course he does!"

"Maybe he's gone to sleep for the winter, though."

"Sh! Shut up! He won't come out as long as you're talkin'!"

You subsided, and with cheekbone glued to the gunstock, and eyes ferociously glaring along the barrel, at the hole beyond, you expectantly bided the first rash movement on the part of Mr. 'Chuck.

In the meantime, what of that woodchuck? Lured afield by the pleasant weather, from his predatory tour he was leisurely returning — halting now to nuzzle amidst the stubble, now to scratch — for a mid-day nap within his subterrene retreat. He waddled into a dried ditch and out again, slipped through his private wicket in a boundary hedge, and gradually working up the slope was approaching his home, on the side opposite to your rail fence, when Hen, suddenly espying him, was as-

tounded into the yelp: "There he is! Shoot! Shoot!"

Startled into immobility, the woodchuck stared about with quivering whiskers and bulging eyes. Boys!

As in a dream, you vaguely saw a squat, furry shape, a cleft, vibrant nose and two broad, yellow teeth; and with the remembrance that your gun was pointing in the general direction of this combination, you desperately tugged at the trigger. Your sole thought was to "shoot, shoot," the quicker the better. The report was the thing.

But no report came. The trigger would not budge.

"Darn it! You old fool, you! You ain't got it cocked!" shrieked Hen, grabbing at your weapon.

With a whistle of decision the woodchuck bolted for sanctuary. He clawed, he slid, he sprawled, all at once. Hen frenziedly delivered both rocks. The 'chuck, at the mouth of his burrow, in a second more would have swung on the pivot of his four short, stout little legs and have whisked in like a brindled streak, when, having succeeded in cocking your piece, you blindly let go — bang!

The butt slammed you under the chin, knocking your teeth together upon your lower lip. You noted it not.

"We got him! We got him!"

Thus Hen, tumbling over the rail fence, was wildly bellowing — with a pardonable extension of the subject pronoun.

"Hurrah!"

You were on your feet in a twinkling, and were dashing in the wake of Hen, up the incline, midway of which, just below the stump, on his side lay the woodchuck, limp and still.

Hen circumspectly reached and stirred him with the tip of a toe; then, emboldened into the attitude of victor, recklessly kicked him.

"He's dead!"

"Je-rusalem! I should say he was!" you agreed, poking the inert mass. "Wasn't that a dandy shot, though?"

"You bet!" praised Hen.

And so it was — considering the attendant circumstances.

Gloatingly you and Hen examined your prize, inch by inch, investigating him from his two front teeth to his scraggly tail. Most of all did you gloat upon the blood, striking proof of your

valor, and ere you had finished you well-nigh could have drawn a diagram of the shot holes.

'Twas established that the aim had been perfect (yourself demonstrating to Hen precisely what had been your course of action), that the gun had shot tremendously, and that the woodchuck was a very prodigy of size and strength.

Poor 'chuck! He had made his last foray, long enough had he dared to live, and now, despite his cunning, he had fallen to a boy who shut both eyes before firing.

Homeward, is it? Certainly! Nothing is left to be gained on the trail. With the stride of conquerors, you and Hen march through the village — you with gun and ammunition flasks, Hen with the woodchuck, which he has appropriated, dangling by the tail.

"Well, well! Where did you get that fellow?" query the men.

"Oh, John and me shot him," explains Hen.

"Crickety, but ain't he a big one! How'd you get him?" query the boys.

"We shot him! And he was runnin', too!" boasts Hen.

"Aw, you found him!"

"Didn't neither — did we, John? You come

here and I'll show you the shot holes in him!"

So, side by side, you and Hen gallantly stepped, with the visible tokens of your calling, homeward bound. At the entrance to your alley, however, Hen inclined to lag; and as the back yard was being traversed he fell further behind. Your own pace was slower and less confident, now.

Hen flung you the woodchuck.

"I've got to go," he maintained. "You can take him."

The back door opened, and mother stood and gazed upon you, even as Hen was discreetly retiring.

"John!" she said. "What have you been doing?"

Beneath its powder grime your face paled. At once you began to realize how your lip was puffing, and how your shoulder was aching,

"We were huntin' woodchucks," you quavered.

"The idea!" said mother.

"We got one, too," you offered, in piteous defense.

"Mercy!" exclaimed mother, at the sight.

"Leave it right there, and come straight into the house!"

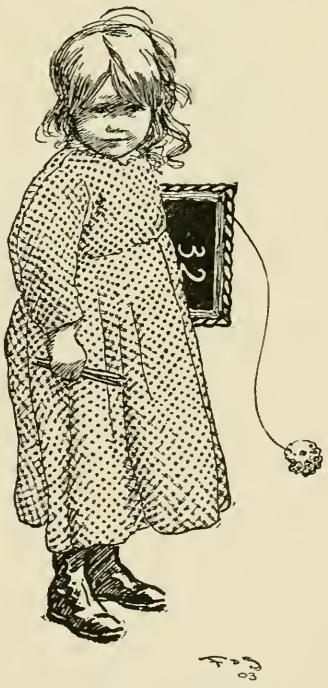
"Ya-a-a!" bantered Hen, gleefully, from the other side of the fence. "You're goin' to ketch it!"

Here the door closed behind you, shutting you in with your shame.

A BOY'S LOVES

A BOY'S LOVES

IN the utmost beginning of things — in that time when roosters were very large, and geese were very fierce, and only mother could avert the thousand perils, heal the thousand wounds — existed a mythical partner established in family annals as "Your Little Sweetheart."



"Annie? Don't you remember Annie! Why, she was Your Little Sweetheart. You used to play together day in and day out. It was so cute to see you!"

But no. You may catch here a bit of blue ribbon, there an echo of a laugh, yet, try as you will, you may not recall her. Evidently when Your Little Sweetheart Annie was put away along with

dresses and curls, she was put away so far that she was lost forever.

What space of months, or of years, elapses, you cannot tell. Nevertheless, suddenly you do witness yourself, still of age most immature, (you recollect that somewhere in this period you were miserably spelled down on "fish"), laying votive offerings upon the desk of your First Love, a girl with brown eyes and rounded, rosy cheeks.

These offerings are in the shape of bright pearl buttons and carnelian pebbles. The transfer requires much breathless daring. Down the aisle of the school-room you march, your gift tightly clutched in your hand, which swings carelessly by your side. Past her seat you scuttle, and, without a single glance, you leave the treasure upon the oaken top, beneath her eyes. Away you hurry, affrighted, ashamed, apprehensive, but hopeful. Presently, blushing, from your seat you steal a look across at her. She smiles roguishly. The offering is gone. It is accepted; for she holds it up that you may see. And you grin back, as red as a beet,

while your heart, exultant, goes thumpity, thumpity, thumpity.

In company with another boy, who must have been a rival, you descry yourself hanging about her gate, turning somersaults, wrestling, and performing all kinds of monkey-shines, in the brazen fancy that she may be peeking out of a window and admiring you. She is framed, for an instant, by the pane. You and he scamper up and deposit in plain view — you upon the right gate-post, he upon the left — a handful apiece of hazelnuts. Then the pair of you withdraw to a discreet distance and wait. Out she trips, and gathers in your handful; but his she disdainfully sweeps off upon the ground.

He whooped in contempt and swaggered in derision; and you — you — what was it you did? Alas! the picture is cut here abruptly, as by a knife; the First Love vanishes, and the Second Love succeeds.

She is the minister's daughter, a gentle, winsome little lass, not at all like the saucebox of the brown eyes and the rich cheeks. In the case of this Second Love there seems to have been no studied wooing, no sheepish bribery by pearl buttons and carnelians and nuts. You

fall in with each other as a matter of course. In playing drop-the-handkerchief you nearly always favor her, and she you; and when either favors some one else the understanding between you is perfect that this is done merely for the sake of appearances.

Your mutual affection is of the telepathic order. Others in the party may romp and squeal and shout in the moonlight, but you and she sit together on the wheelbarrow, and look on in tolerant, eloquent silence.

In games you have occasionally kissed just the tip of her ear, and that was sufficient. Teasing companions may cry: "Aw, kiss her! Fraidie! fraidie! *That* ain't kissin'!" But you know *she* knows, and smacks — those boisterous smacks current in the realm — are superfluous.

In addition to the kissing games, and the state of exaltation upon the wheelbarrow, you are able to conjure up yourself in another rôle: at the frozen river's edge, strapping on her skates — your first remembered gallantry.

Assailed by the shrill scoffings of your rude comrades, under the refining influence of love you kneel before her as she is struggling with a stiff buckle. Like to the manner born, she

permits you to assist. Then — then you skated, you and she, for each other's sake enduring all the pursuing gibes? This point is not clear. You may not further linger with her, the minister's daughter, your Second Love, for in a hop, skip, and jump you are worshiping at the skirts of the Third Love.

Her eyes are black — large and black. You are desperately smitten. You live, move, and have your being in a very ecstasy of fervor.

Her name is Lillian. Somewhere, somehow, you have run upon the lines of Tennyson:

"Airy, fairy Lilian,
Flitting, fairy Lilian,
When I ask her if she love me,
Clasps her tiny hands above me;
. . . . .
She'll not tell me if she love me,
Cruel little Lilian."

They appeal to you. They touch a spot which seems not to be reached by even Oliver Optic or "The Gorilla Hunters." You *must* have poetry, and you memorize them, and repeat them over and over

to yourself, regardless of the fact that she, your inspiration, is neither airy, fairy, nor flitting, but of substantial, buxom proportions.

The Third Love, with her bold black eyes and her generous plumpness, is not so submissive as was that gentle Second Love. She flouts you. When the mood is upon her, she makes faces at you. At a party, when you stammer:

> "The stars are shining bright;
> May I see you home to-night?"

as like as not she turns up her nose, or else she tosses her head and snaps ungraciously: "Oh, I s'pose so!"

You never are sure of her; yet always you find yourself meekly at her apron-strings.

You willingly go to church (you conceive that your family does not know why, but in this you are much mistaken), because she sits in front of you. What a blissful, comfortable feeling you have, with her safely installed near at hand, twitching her short braids not more than three feet before your happy nose!

When the pew is filled to overflowing, then, sometimes, you are crowded out into her pew.

Embarrassed of mien, you decorously slide into your new location, she receiving your presence with a shrug and a sniff, and you growing redder and redder as you imagine that all the congregation must be reading your secret.

In a moment she darts at you a sly glance (the coquette! How vastly superior she is to you in the wiles of love!), and you swell and swell, until it seems to you that you are towering into the raftered heights above.

And at the conspicuousness thus entailed you blush yet deeper.

Ah, her folks are about to leave town; she is to move away! The news comes with sickening directness, and on top of the announcement she pitilessly asserts that she is glad. You muster courage to declare that you are "going to write." She flirts her bangs, and retorts grudgingly: "*I* don't care."

Which is all the good-by that you get.

Beyond childish notes, you never have written to a girl; and what a bothersome time this first letter gives you! The chief trouble lies in the start. "Dear Friend," which appears to be the address sanctioned by society, is too commonplace and formal; "Dear Lillian" may err in

the other direction, she is ridiculously touchy. You want something unique, and in your researches you encounter "Chérie" — where, history reveals not.

"Chérie" sounds nice; you do not know what it means, but all the better, for consequently it is finely ambiguous; and, proud of your originality, you take it. Once started, you occupy four pages, in your scrawling script, with what you deem to be clever badinage. Badinage is the main conversational stock in trade of girl-and-boy days.

Principally you rail her about a certain youth of your town with whom she used, to your torment, to run races. You hope that she will reply in a manner to convey that really she despised that other chap and is longing for you.

Two weeks of waiting. Then, one noon, your father, with an arch remark, fishes from an inside pocket a little square envelope, and passes it to you, at the dinner-table. The dinner-table, of all public places!

You endeavor calmly to receive it with a cursory glance; but you deposit it in your jacket well aware that your trembling frame emanates confusion.

Having bolted your dinner, you retire to the barn loft to revel in the missive. The double sheet of miniature stationery has a rosebud imprinted at the top.

Alas! underneath are the thorns.

Friend Will: No, I don't have George Brown to run races with any more, but I have somebody lots better, and we run races every night. Don't you wish you knew who it was, smartie?

Even yet the lines rankle. They but indicate the tenor of the whole letter — a letter from which you failed, no matter how earnestly you pored over it, to obtain one grain of comfort.

You try her again, with another clumsy essay at wit. Answer never comes, and for a while you sneak about afraid that the truth will leak out, and you be made a butt by your schoolmates.

The queen is dead! Live the queen! This

Fourth Love is a "new girl," a stranger who one morn dawns upon your vision in the schoolroom. She is an adorable creature, with blue eyes, golden hair, and a bridling air that challenges your attention. With joy you learn, at home, that your folks know her folks; and when your mother proposes that you go with her to make a friendly call, so that "the little girl won't get lonesome for want of acquaintances," you accede unhesitatingly.

You are presented at court, and, sitting with her upon the sofa, do your best to be entertaining while the elders chat about "help" and church. You grasp, from her sprightly remarks, that she is well accustomed to boy admirers. She speaks of her "fellow"! She writes to him! He "felt awful bad" to have her leave! Beside hers, your experience in the ways of the world — particularly boy-ways and girl-ways, mingled — appears pitifully meager, and beneath her assertions and giggling sallies you are ofttimes ill at ease.

Impressed with her value, you depart, escorting your mother; and that night, before you go to sleep, you firmly resolve to win this girl or perish.

The Fourth Love resolves into a sad thing of mawkish sentiment. You are not given to mooning or spooning. You are too healthy. Drop-the-handkerchief, clap-in and clap-out, post-office — these tumultuous kissing games, open and aboveboard, are the alpha and omega of the caresses in your set. However, the new girl instils another element, hitherto foreign to the social intercourse.

To-day you recall, with great vividness, that winter evening before supper, when you lingered, on your way home, in the front hall at her house, planning with her to go skating.

"Oh, isn't it dark!" she piped suddenly. "I can't see you at all."

"And I can't see you, either," you responded.

Silence.

"Where are you?" she whispered.

"Oh, I'm here by the door. Are you 'fraid?" you bantered innocently.

Silence.

"S'posing you kissed me! Wouldn't that be awful!" she tittered in pretended horror.

But you — you summoned your chivalry, and went forth secure in the knowledge that you had not taken advantage of her helplessness.

This was the end. From that evening dated her coldness. Another boy jumped in and supplanted you. You encountered them together, and they looked upon you and laughed. He informed you that she said you "hadn't any sense." You sent back a counter-accusation, which he gladly reported. But enough; away with this Eve. What becomes of her you are able to decipher not. Let us consider the Fifth Love.

Her you acquire deliberately, with purpose aforethought, so to speak. A love is now absolutely necessary to you, and casting about, you hit upon the girl across the street. You have known her virtually all your life. She is not very pretty; she is just a plain, jolly, wholesome lassie, who is continually running over to your house, and with whom you are as free as with your own sister; but she will do.

Forthwith you begin a campaign. You walk home with her; you lend her books; you take

her riding — a real, ceremonious ride, and not, as formerly, merely a lift down-town; you strive as hard as you can to enthuse over her and remark beauties in her. And she, meantime a little flustered and astonished at your unwonted assiduousness, accepts your crafty attentions and frankly confides to your sister that she wishes *she* had a brother.

Unsuspicious girl! She treats you with a camaraderie which should warn you, but which only proves your undoing.

Mindful of the lesson gained at the hands of the Fourth Love, she the sentimental, you resolve that you will not be classed, in this present instance, as having "no sense." Accordingly, one evening, upon parting with the Fifth Love at her gate, you baldly propose — well, you blurt awkwardly:

"Let's kiss good night."

With what scorn she spurns the suggestion! Then, while your ears are afire and you hang your head, she administers a severe, virtuous lecture upon the impropriety of an act such as you mention.

"But lots of boys and girls do it," you hazard.

She does not believe you; and, anyway, *she*

never would. And she packs you home. You trudge across the street, angry, irritated, abashed, uncertain as to whether she was hoaxing you or whether she was sincere.

Girls are the *darndest* creatures!

Evidently here closes the episode of the Fifth Love. It was but natural that thereafter you should be rather disconcerted when in her presence; and although she might act as if nothing had happened, *you* (plagued unmercifully by your sister) could not forget.

And the Sixth Love? Yes, she followed, with scarce a decent interval, hard upon the exit of the all too high-minded Fifth. Maybe it was in a spirit of pique that you sought her. Whatever the preliminary circumstance, regard yourself eventually head over heels again, immersed in the current of a passion equaled only by your affair with that Third Love — "cruel little Lilian."

This Sixth Love, too, has black eyes and an engaging plumpness. Black eyes, apparently, are the eyes most fatal to you. For the Sixth

Love you would unflinchingly die, if life without her were the alternative; and you picture to yourself the manner in which she would mourn (you hope) when you are lying cold and still, with just your white face showing, in the family parlor.

No matter how circuitous it makes your route, going and coming you always manage to pass her house.

You wonder if she is proud of you because you can throw a curve. You would like to have her see that you are strong, and skilled in all the exercises to which boys are heir. You want to be her ideal, her knight. Sometimes you suspect that she does not thoroughly appreciate your prowess and good points, for she prates of other boys who do so and so, whereas you can easily do as much and more.

Now, whether or not it was due to the snake-curves (every boy is positive, soon or late, that he can throw a snake-curve), looking back you

behold yourself possessed at last of this maiden of your choice. Of course no word of love has been uttered between you. That would be too silly and theatrical, almost morbid; furthermore, it is unnecessary. She has shyly confessed to you that she "likes" you, and this is sufficient. You generously refrain from urging her beyond this maiden admission.

Aye, 't is distance lends enchantment to the view! You have been so accustomed to the excitement of the chase that with idleness you wax restive. The Sixth Love verges upon being a nuisance. Her black eyes, beaming for you alone, pall upon you. You grow callous toward her. You tire of always having her choose you at parties; you tire of her eternal assumption of proprietorship over you; you wish that she would not come so much to see your sister, and thrust herself upon you in your home.

And you set out to shake her off; you skip by the back door as she enters by the front; you avoid her at parties; you show her, in a dozen ways, that you do not fancy her any more.

Poor anxious, forsaken Sixth Love! It is she who turns the wooer; it is she who passes and repasses *your* house; it is she who haunts *your*

steps, hoping that she may catch a glimpse of you. Regardless of the fact that you yourself so often have played this game, you remain obdurate. Finally pride rises to her rescue, and she sends notice that she "hates you."

"Pooh! Who cares!" you sniff, with a curl of the lip.

Thus lapses behind you the Sixth Love; and although you have a faint vision of her parading, to meet your eyes, your most despised enemy, whom, in bravado, she had immediately adopted, memory indicates that you were unaffected by the sight, save to sneer, and that already the Seventh Love was engrossing your attention.

For there was a Seventh Love, and an Eighth, and more besides, to constitute a long train of wee, innocent heart-troubles as evanescent as a dream, but at their time just as real; until from this series of shallow, dancing ripples of Boy's Love, lo! one day you suddenly emerged upon the deep ocean of Man's Love, and anchored in the quiet haven where She awaited — She, the gracious embodiment of the best in these her girlish predecessors.

NOON

NOON

AFTER all, it is no fun posing at being a man. It is not, as you would inform the other boys, the pleasant sinecure that it is currently presumed to be, amongst your kind. The picture has more depth than appears at the distance. As you approach, you note only the surface tints; but when you have arrived, then begin to unfold aspects previously quite unsuspected.

So now, having had experience, you fain would turn back, and doffing for all time those starchy, heavy, strait-jacket garments which you have mistakenly donned, you would resume the free-and-easy blouse and knickerbockers and tattered brim, and would rejoin your gay brethren of school and vacation. You have learned your lesson, and you will leave them no more.

So be it. But alas, unavailingly you stop on

your way down-town, beside the vacant lot where the other boys are playing ball, and look wistfully in upon them. None yells:

"Come on, Jocko. You're tenth fielder."

Once the ball rolls your way. You toss it back — toss it awkwardly, somehow, proving that you are out of practice. However, you can limber up right speedily. You have been away, they should know.

"Aw, you're out! You're out! You are too! Ask that man. He's out, ain't he, Mister?"

You wait for "that man," wherever he may be, to reply. But you yourself are the sole spectator, and you gaze right and left, puzzled.

"He's out — ain't he!"

You! It is you to whom they are appealing! You nod, confusedly.

"Ya-a-a! The man says you're out!"

The man! The word gives you a little shock. They are styling you "man"! A sensation of disappointment and surprise sweeps through you; here you are, Rip Van Winkle, whom nobody knows. If only these your former cronies might see through and recognize what lies behind this thin disguise, they would realize that you really are but ten, and one of them.

All in the broad sun the other boys are "goin' fishin'." It is a prime day. Your being tingles for the poise of the trusty old pole upon your shoulder, and the feel of the fat bait-can in your jacket pocket. Hang business! You repudiate its tyranny. That "engagement" may importune, in vain. The perch are running, the kids are "all catchin' 'em," "fishin'" is "dandy." Hurrah! The old-time *wanderlust* is stirring in your veins. You will go. But — something holds you back. It will not be much fun to fish alone. Something tells you that even though you "fire" your shoes and stockings and strip to shirt and trousers, and boldly enter the fray, still will you be an alien, and looked upon askance. You are a "man," and perch and bullheads are not for the likes of you.

Nevertheless, you can try. There hastens Hen — or, at least, one who might be Hen — pattering down the street, all accoutered for the ranks of joy and rivalry.

"Goin' fishin'?" you demand bluffly.

"Yes, sir."

"Sir!" In a word has he relegated you to your place. He knows you — knows that you have no fish-worms in your pocket, and that to

match his mighty pole you have only a paltry jointed "rod."

He pauses impatiently. He has little time to waste with you.

"Any good?"

"Yes, sir."

Irksomely respectful, now with a wriggle he is off, onward into his magic realms, leaving you to gaze after, chastened, chagrined.

Oh, this hideous disguise — this iron metamorphosis which wizard Time, the inexorable, has laid upon you! There is no dropping it.

You turn to Nature; surely Nature has the acumen to recognize that you have grown not at all, save, perhaps, in stature. But the sun burns, the rain wets, the snow chills — each uncompromising and austere. The pond that once stretched away like an ocean shrinks and shallows at your coming, till you can almost step from bank to bank; the once limitless wood, as wild and as romantic as the Carpathians, mischievously contracts so that you can see through from side to side; the highroad is dusty, and the paths refuse to lead, but are finished in a stride. Everything conspires to remind you that you are foreign, Brobdingnagian, a

personage apart, and that too late have you faced about.

To the pleasures and to the favors that were you have forfeited the "Open, sesame!"

You may not reinstate yourself by the company that you keep, for the company of old — where is it? Vanished; changed, like yourself; resistlessly urged on and ever on by the current which there is no stemming. Hen is a "man" — he runs a grocery store. Billy Lunt is a "man" — and an M.D., to boot. "Fat" Day is a "man" — even an alderman. "Snoopie" Mitchell, aye, the independent, envied Snoopie, whom naught, you believed, could coerce, is a "man" — for sometimes you are whirled along behind his engine. They all seem to glory in their estate and its attributes. And to them, *you* are a "man."

Exists only one authority to support your quest of boyhood; only one heart, besides your own, which apparently would be glad to have you again in blouse and knickerbockers; and to her you are still a boy, with the freckles concealed, merely, by that pointed beard at which she gently rails even in her pride. Mother! You can depend upon mother, as of yore. She

is no older, herself; she is the same. Mother never changes. You are no older, yourself; you are the same. Let the other boys call you "man" and say "sir"; let sun and rain and snow, and pond and wood and path, deny you their one-time hospitality. To all the world without you may be a "man," but to mother you are her "boy."

Yet Time, forsooth, wrests even this anchorage from you. Comes an hour when, confronted by the inevitable, helpless in its grip, unreconciled even in your resignation, you dully stand by a bedside and wait — wait — wait.

Suddenly the eyes open and look up into yours with understanding. The graying, wrinkled face faintly smiles.

"What a great big boy you are getting to be, Johnny," she murmurs, in vague surprise.

That is all. She is gone, and with her departs your last hold upon the things that were. Your morning is passed forever. It is noon. You must turn away, irrevocably the man.

THE END

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